

Working together



South Hams District Council And West Devon Borough Council

Frequently Asked Questions Confidential Reporting Policy

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL and WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY

1. What is the Confidential Reporting Policy?

This is a policy which allows workers employed by the Councils to “blow the whistle” on fraud, corruption, abuse or other inappropriate action or behaviour by someone inside, or working for, the Councils. The policy is designed to protect the whistle blower from possible adverse consequences.

2. Who is protected?

Anyone working for the Councils – employees, agency workers, and contractors’ staff. The Policy covers “workers” and so includes people who work for the Council but are not directly employed by the Council.

3. How do I know if I should blow the whistle?

You will probably feel uncomfortable about something that you have seen, or discovered because it isn’t right, or doesn’t seem to comply with the Councils’ usual standards of behaviour. It may be against the Councils’ Procedure Rules and policies; or somehow fall below established standards of practice; or amount to improper conduct. If in doubt, ask to speak to the Monitoring Officer. He/she will advise you and help you make up your mind.

4. What should I do if I find something is amiss?

You should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager. They should be able to advise you. Your Manager will refer the matter to the Councils’ Monitoring Officer, as they need to know because they are responsible for ensuring that the Councils stay within the law, and for operating this policy. You can go straight to the Monitoring Officer if you wish.

You need to explain as clearly as you can:

- The background and history of your concern, giving the dates of relevant events and explaining their consequences; and
- The reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

5. If you prefer you can go to any of these officers instead:

- The S. 151 Officer (Director of Strategic Finance);
- The Chief Executive;
- Director of Strategy and Governance; or
- Internal Audit.

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6. What happens next?

Your manager, or the Monitoring Officer, will acknowledge your concerns and will tell you what will happen next. Depending on how serious your allegation is, it may:

- Be investigated by management, internal audit, or through the disciplinary process;
- Be referred to the Police;
- Be referred to the external auditor; or
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry.

We will try to keep you informed about what is happening but it may not always be possible (especially if it has to be taken out of the Councils' hands). You will be told the outcome.

7. What if my allegation is found to be untrue?

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 false allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain or revenge, disciplinary action may be taken against you.

8. What isn't covered by the policy?

If you have a complaint about the way that you have been treated as an employee, you should use the **Grievance Procedure**.

If you have a complaint about the way you, or someone else, has been treated as a user of the Councils' services, you should use the ordinary **Complaints Procedure**.

If you think that a Member of the Council has not acted in accordance with their code of conduct, you can make a complaint under that code and it will be considered by the Standards Committee.