

# Lingfield Primary School

A Personal Best School



## Whistleblowing FAQs

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## 1. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when an employee reports suspected past, present or imminent wrongdoing, or an attempt to conceal wrongdoing. Officially this is called 'making a disclosure in the public interest'. Whistleblowing is important to safeguard the effective delivery of public services, and to ensure value for money. It serves to protect and reassure the workforce, and to maintain a healthy working culture and an efficient organisation. The reporting of a wrongdoing under this policy may be covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the Act).

## 2. What can I raise under the Whistleblowing Procedure?

- Criminal offences
- Unlawful acts
- Improper and/or unethical behaviour
- Endangering the health or safety of any individual
- Miscarriage of justice
- Financial malpractice, impropriety or fraud
- Mishandling or risks to data and/or information
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Breaches of Departmental policies and procedures, or of the Code of Conduct (only where an employee does not feel able to report their concerns through the grievance procedure)
- Deliberate concealment of any of the above.

## 3. What is the purpose of the whistleblowing policy?

The whistleblowing policy aims to encourage employees and others associated with Surrey County Council to report serious concerns about misconduct, malpractice, or unethical behaviour without fear of reprisal. It ensures that such concerns are addressed promptly and Appropriately.

## 4. Who is covered by the whistleblowing policy?

The policy applies to all Council employees, whether full-time, part-time, permanent, or temporary. It also covers members of the Council, agency workers, contractors, consultants, and providers of works, services, and supplies, including external contractors and those providing services under a contract with the Council.

## 5. What types of concerns can be reported under the whistleblowing policy?

Concerns that can be reported include conduct that is an offence or breach of law, failure to comply with legal obligations, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, environmental damage, misuse of public funds, fraud and corruption, and abuse of service users. Examples might include:

- **Fraud and Corruption:** An employee notices that a colleague is manipulating financial records to embezzle funds from the Council. Reporting this under the whistleblowing policy would initiate an investigation into the fraudulent activities.
- **Health and Safety Risks:** A staff member observes that safety protocols are being ignored in a Council-run facility, putting employees and the public at risk. Raising this concern can lead to corrective actions to ensure safety standards are met.
- **Environmental Damage:** An employee discovers that waste from a Council project is being disposed of improperly, causing environmental harm. Reporting this can prompt an investigation and necessary measures to mitigate the damage.
- **Misuse of Public Funds:** A contractor working with the Council is found to be overcharging for services or billing for work not performed. This misuse of public funds can be reported under the whistleblowing policy for further scrutiny.
- **Legal Non-Compliance:** An employee becomes aware that the Council is not complying with certain legal obligations, such as data protection laws. Reporting this can help the Council address and rectify the non-compliance issues.
- **Abuse of Service Users:** A staff member witnesses or suspects that a service user in a Council-run care home is being physically or psychologically abused. Reporting this can lead to an investigation and protection for the service user.
- **Miscarriages of Justice:** An employee has evidence that a decision made by the Council has led to an unfair outcome for an individual or group. Reporting this can help correct the injustice and prevent future occurrences.
- **Concealment of Information:** An employee finds out that important information related to public health and safety is being deliberately concealed by a senior manager. Reporting this can ensure that the information is disclosed, and appropriate actions are taken.
- **Sexual Harassment:** A staff member experiences or witnesses sexual harassment within the workplace. Reporting this under the whistleblowing policy can lead to an investigation and appropriate disciplinary actions against the perpetrator.
- **Discrimination:** An employee notices discriminatory practices in hiring, promotion, or treatment of staff based on race, gender, or other protected characteristics. Reporting this can help address and eliminate discriminatory practices within the Council.

6. How can I raise a concern under the whistleblowing policy?

Concerns can be raised internally with immediate managers, senior managers, or specific officers such as the Chief Executive or Director of Finance. Alternatively, concerns can be reported externally through the independent Navex Global helpline (Freephone: 0800 069 8180).

7. Will my identity be kept confidential if I raise a concern?

Yes, all concerns will be treated confidentially. While anonymous reports are accepted, providing your name can facilitate further inquiries. The Council will protect your identity as much as possible.

8. What protection do I have if I raise a concern in good faith?

The Council will protect whistle-blowers from harassment or victimisation. No action will be taken against staff who raise concerns in good faith, even if they are mistaken. However, malicious or false allegations may result in disciplinary action.

9. What happens after I raise a concern?

The Council will investigate all concerns thoroughly and impartially. Initial inquiries will determine if a full investigation is warranted. Investigations will be conducted confidentially, and you will be informed of the outcome where possible.

10. Can I raise a concern anonymously?

Yes, you can raise a concern anonymously via the independent whistleblowing platform Navex

11. What should I do if I am unsure whether to raise a concern?

If you are unsure whether to raise a concern, you can seek independent and confidential advice from the whistleblowing charity Protect, which has a helpline on 020 3117 2520. They can provide guidance on whether and how to raise a public interest concern.

12. How is the whistleblowing policy monitored and reviewed?

The Head of People and Change, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, is responsible for the maintenance and operation of this policy. The policy is reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and appropriateness, and to assess whether concerns.