



people policies

Whistleblowing Procedure





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About this procedure

We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. Any suspected wrongdoing should be reported as soon as possible.

This procedure covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, those on work experience or work-shadowing; volunteers, casual workers and agency workers; and staff employed by us in Local Authority maintained schools.

Employees in Local Authority maintained schools should use their school's own Whistleblowing Procedure to address issues. For employees in Community, Community Special and Voluntary Controlled schools should the matter pertain to the chair of governors of the school or, exceptionally, the headteacher where the Governing Body would not be able to deal with the matter, the council's Whistleblowing procedure should be followed.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

This procedure should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure, or Bullying, Harassment and Inappropriate Behaviour procedure.

This procedure will be reviewed regularly by the HR Team, in line with best practice.

Our Audit Team will regularly monitor the number of Whistleblowing disclosures.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to our activities. This may include:

- criminal activity;
- failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- miscarriages of justice;
- danger to health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- bribery (including under our Anti-corruption and Bribery Policy);
- financial fraud or mismanagement;
- breach of our internal policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct;
- conduct likely to damage our reputation or financial wellbeing;
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- negligence;
- the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.

If you are unsure whether to use this procedure or want impartial advice at any stage, contact the independent charity Public Concern at Work which operates a confidential helpline. Their advisers will give you free, confidential advice and their contact details are at the end of this procedure.



How to raise a concern

We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns by completing this web form.

However, if you are not able to use the web form, you can discuss with your manager who can help complete the web form.

Alternatively you should contact the Advice Centre on: 0117 35 21400.

You will receive an initial response within 10 working days. We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this procedure. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

Confidentiality

We hope staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this procedure. Completely anonymous disclosures are 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.

We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. However, if you choose to raise a concern anonymously, it will be treated in the same way where a whistleblower's name is known.

Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should contact the Advice Centre on 0117 35 21400 and appropriate measures can be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from our Employee Assistance Programme on 0800 840 6844 or Public Concern at Work, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this procedure.

External disclosures

The aim of this procedure 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.

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. Public Concern at Work operates a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this procedure.



Investigation and outcome

Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

Sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or its outcome, or any disciplinary or other action taken as a result.

You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

Protection and support for whistleblowers

We aim to encourage openness and will support whistleblowers who raise genuine concerns under this procedure, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

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 Advice Centre immediately by calling: 0117 35 21400. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure or refer to our Bullying, Harassment and Inappropriate Behaviour procedure.

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. In some cases the whistleblower could have a right to sue you personally for compensation in an employment tribunal.

The Employee Assistance Programme provides support and counselling and is available to whistleblowers who raise concerns under this procedure. Their contact details, as well as those for Public Concern at Work are:

**Public Concern at Work
(Independent whistleblowing charity)**

Helpline: (020) 7404 6609
Email: whistle@pcaw.co.uk
Website: www.pcaw.co.uk

**Employee Assistance Programme /
confidential counselling**

24-hour phone line: 0800 8606844
<https://bristolcc-help.wellbeingzone.co.uk>
(Organisational code is BCC1)



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Contact: hr.advicecentre@bristol.gov.uk

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The audience of this document is made aware that a physical copy may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on The Source.

Those to whom this policy applies are responsible for familiarising themselves periodically with the latest version and for complying with policy requirements at all times.

History of most recent policy changes – must be completed

| Version | Date | Change |
|---------|-----------------|---|
| v2.01 | 19 March 2018 | Elected members incorrectly stated as being covered by the procedure. Reference to elected members therefore removed. |
| v2.00 | 3 February 2017 | Re-written |
| v1.01 | 2 June 2016 | Scope widened to include employees of LA maintained schools |
| v1.00 | 24 July 2014 | Re-formatted policy |

