



London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Whistleblowing policy for staff in schools

Members of staff may be the first to spot anything that is seriously wrong within the Council. However, they might not say anything because they think this would be disloyal, or they might be worried that their suspicions are not justified. They may also be worried that they or someone else may be victimised.

Members of the public (for example, parents of students) may also share some of these concerns. That is why we have produced this whistleblowing policy to help staff and the public to contact us with their concerns.

We are committed to being open, honest and accountable. Our Standards Committee has a role to play in promoting high standards. They and the Corporate Director of Children's Services want anyone who has serious concerns about any aspect of our schools' work to raise those concerns.

This policy aims to make sure that if you want to raise any concern, you can do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

What types of action are covered by the policy?

The policy is intended to deal with **serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following.**

- Fraud or corruption
- Children or students being mistreated
- Unauthorised use of public money
- An unlawful act
- Any danger to health and safety
- The environment being damaged (for example, by pollution)
- A person abusing their position or any unauthorised use or for personal gain
- A person deliberately not keeping to a Council policy, an official code of practice, any law or regulation, or any procedures agreed by the local education authority or governing body
- A person failing to meet appropriate professional standards

- A person being discriminated against because of their race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, sex, sexuality, class or home life

This policy applies to all staff working in schools and educational establishments as well as contractors working on school premises (for example, agency staff, builders and drivers). It also covers suppliers and people who provide services to the school.

These procedures build upon our complaints procedure and other reporting procedures applying to some departments. Head teachers and site managers are responsible for making all relevant people aware of these procedures.

What is not covered?

You cannot use this policy to deal with serious or sensitive matters that are covered by other procedures. Such procedures include the following.

- Staff's complaints about their employment. These complaints are dealt with through our Grievance Procedure.
- Customers' complaints about our services. These complaints are dealt with through our Complaints Procedure.

Also, you cannot use this policy to raise issues that have already been settled through other procedures.

Protecting you

If your allegation is true, you have nothing to fear. But we understand that deciding to blow the whistle is not easy.

If you raise a concern which you believe is true, we will take appropriate action under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 to protect you from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

We will keep your concerns confidential if this is what you want. In this case we will not reveal your name or position without your permission or unless we have to do so by law. We would explain this at the time you raise a concern so you can decide whether or not to proceed.

If you work for the Council, you should also know that any allegation you make will not influence, or be influenced by, any unrelated disciplinary action against you or any redundancy procedures that may affect you.

Anonymous allegations

Because we will protect you (as explained above), we encourage you to give your name when you make an allegation. Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective and if, for example, we do not have enough information, we may not be able to investigate the matter at all.

If you feel that you cannot give your name, the Group Manager of Operations at Human Resources will decide whether or not to consider the matter. This will depend on:

- the seriousness of the matter;
- whether your concern is believable; and
- whether we can carry out an investigation based on the information you have provided.

Untrue allegations

If you make an allegation which you believe is true, but it is not confirmed by our investigation, we will not take any action against you.

However, if you make an allegation which you know is untrue, we will take appropriate disciplinary or legal action against you.

How to raise a concern

You should first raise your concern, in writing, with your immediate supervisor, your manager, or a member of the senior management team. (This will depend on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter and who is suspected of the wrongdoing.) If the relevant manager cannot deal with the matter, he or she will refer the concern to the Head of Human Resources.

You can also raise your concerns in the following ways.

- By writing to the Head of Human Resources at:

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Civic Centre
Dagenham
Essex
RM10 7BN.

Write 'Private and confidential' on your envelope.

- By phoning the Head of Human Resources or **Group Manager HR Services** on **020 8724 8470** (during normal office hours).
- By contacting one of your school governors. (They will confidentially report the matter to the Head of Human Resources or **Group Manager HR Services**)

If you want to raise a concern out of hours, or if your concern is wide-ranging and cuts across different schools or Council departments, please contact the Councils Whistleblowing Officer in one of the following ways.

- By writing to the Whistleblowing Officer at:
Internal Audit Section
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
First Floor
Civic Centre Annexe
Dagenham
RM10 7BN
Write 'Private and Confidential' on your envelope.
- By phoning the Whistleblowing line on 020 8227 2541. You can leave a voice-mail message 24 hours a day. Only the Whistleblowing Officer (or the Corporate Complaints Manager if the Whistleblowing Officer is off work) can pick up the messages left.
- By sending an e-mail to: whistle-blowing@lbbd.gov.uk
(Do not send an e-mail if the matter is confidential.)

It is best to put your concerns in writing and give the Head of Human Resources or the Whistleblowing Officer as much information as possible - including any relevant names, dates, places and so on. The earlier you raise a concern, the easier it will probably be to take effective action.

Although you will not have to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that your allegation is true, you will have to show that there are good reasons for your concern.

Help for you

You may want to discuss your concern with a friend or colleague. You may then find it easier to raise a concern if others share the same experiences or concerns.

If you work for the Council, your trade union representative can give you general support and advice, or act for you if this would help. This could be useful, particularly if you do not want the Head of Human Resources or Whistleblowing Officer to know who you are.

We will encourage the trade unions to support any member of staff who raises a concern with them.

If your concern is about a governor, raise your concern by writing to the Corporate Director of Children's Services:

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Town Hall
Barking
Essex
IG11 7LU.

Write 'Private and confidential' on your envelope.

How we respond to your concerns

The way we deal with the concern will depend on what it involves.

We will first make enquiries to decide whether we should carry out an investigation and, if so, how we should go about it. Throughout all our enquiries and any investigation, our main concern will be to put the interests of the public first.

Your concern may be investigated by senior management, our internal auditors, or through the disciplinary process, or we may refer it to:

- the police;
- other agencies (for example, if it involves the abuse of children or vulnerable adults it may be referred to the Executive Director of Health and Social Care);
- our external auditor; or
- an independent investigator.

If your concern or allegation can be handled under any other procedure or policy, we will pass it on to the relevant person and let you know.

We may be able to settle some concerns without carrying out an investigation but by taking action agreed by you.

If we need to take urgent action, we will do this before carrying out any investigation.

Within 10 working days of you raising a concern, the officer dealing with the matter (that is, the Head of Human Resources or the Whistleblowing Officer) will:

- acknowledge that we have received your concern;
- explain how we will handle the matter; and
- tell you what support is available to you.

It is difficult to set further timescales as they depend on the nature of the allegation and the type of investigation we need to carry out.

The amount of contact you have with the Head of Human Resources or the Whistleblowing Officer will depend on the nature of your concern, the potential difficulties involved, and how clear the information you have given is.

If you need to have a meeting, you can be accompanied by a friend or a representative from a trade union or professional association. Meetings with the person investigating the matter will normally take place in his or her office but can be arranged elsewhere, but not in your home unless there are exceptional circumstances.

We will take steps to reduce any difficulties you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you need to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, we will arrange for you to get advice on the procedure.

We will usually give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation.

Details of any concerns raised will be kept confidential by London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (unless they are found to be malicious and lead to disciplinary procedures) but will not be placed on your personal file.

How you can take a matter further

We hope you will be satisfied with any action we take. If you're not, and you want to take the matter outside the Council, you could contact:

- the Chair of Governors who will convene the appropriate committee;
- our external auditor;
- the Audit Commission;
- your local Citizens' Advice Bureau;
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- a relevant voluntary organisation; or
- the police.

If you take the matter outside the Council, take care not to reveal any confidential information.

Independent advice

You can get independent advice or support from an organisation called Public Concern at Work. Their address is:

Suite 301
16 Baldwins Gardens
London
EC1N 7RJ.
Phone: 020 7404 6609
E-mail: whistle@pcaw.co.uk