

HOW TO RAISE ISSUES WHICH CAUSE YOU SERIOUS CONCERN

This is an extract from Leicestershire's County Council policy on raising issues, which cause you serious concern. You will see that it is written mainly for staff but you may come across situations when you would want to know about this procedure.

Foster carers can also report issues of concern to:-

Ofsted
NBU, 3rd Floor
Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester

☎ 08456 404040 Fax 08456 404049 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

This note has been drawn up to advise you about the procedures which should be followed when you wish to draw attention to issues of bad practice, possible fraud or corruption or other matters which seem to be against the interests of the public, or the Council or its employees.

The County Council and its employees have a duty to ensure that service users are respected and treated in a proper manner, and that the standards of the service it provides are maintained at the highest possible level. The Council also has the duty to ensure that resources (finance and employees,) paid for with public money, are used effectively and without waste. Employees have a right to be treated with respect by their colleagues, service users and the County Council as their employer.

WHEN TO USE THE PROCEDURE

If you have serious concerns about any aspect of the service provision or the conduct of anyone acting on behalf of the Council you may not be sure whether there is a case for investigation. In these circumstances it may be helpful to remember that you have a duty both to members of the public and your colleagues. As a guide it might be helpful to ask the question 'Is this situation unacceptable to me?' 'Is this wasteful?' 'Could this be done better' If the answer is 'yes' then you should follow the procedure set out below even if this could place you in an embarrassing situation with a particular colleague or group of colleagues.

You are expected to raise issues promptly and in good faith and can expect matters raised to be investigated properly and fairly.

PROCEDURE

You can raise concerns orally or in writing. Whichever you decide to do, you should make a note so that you have a record for future reference. This note should include what occurred, where and when, and also who you submitted the complaint to and when. If you decide to raise a matter orally, you may be requested to make a written statement at a later stage depending on the circumstances.

The seriousness of the issue will influence who you decide to raise it with. It may be:

- Your immediate Supervisor or Team Leader
- A Manager
- A Senior or Chief Officer.

If the issue is of a very serious nature, for example concerning mistreatment of service users, maladministration or an illegal act, you may decide that it is appropriate to contact your Chief Officer. Or you can contact the Chief Executive or the County Solicitor who is the Council's Monitoring Officer, with statutory responsibility for taking action on illegality or maladministration. If the issue involves possible fraud or corruption you may decide to contact the County Treasurer or the Audit Manager in the Treasurer's Department.

If you are unsure who to contact you can telephone the Chief Personnel Officer who will give you advice. Trade union members may also wish to contact their trade union for assistance or advice.

If you feel that the issue is sufficiently serious for you to put it in writing, you can write directly to the people referred to above, marking the envelope 'Personal'. The officer concerned will open this and you will be guaranteed a response within 7 days. This can be sent to your home address if you indicate that this is what you want.

If someone gives information to you which is of concern to them you should treat it seriously in accordance with this procedure and not dismiss it without giving it proper thought.

If you raise an issue under this procedure in good faith, believing it to be true the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects you from any repercussions on your present position or future career. The Act does not protect anyone who is acting maliciously, making false allegations or who is seeking personal gain.

While issues raised anonymously will still be looked into, it is much better for complainants to identify themselves so that the matter can be dealt with. Everything possible will be done to protect your identity, but you may be requested to act as a witness if disciplinary or other proceedings follow the investigation of the issues you have raised.

EMPLOYEES WHO ARE THE SUBJECT OF COMPLAINTS

If you are the subject of a complaint under this procedure it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate disciplinary procedure. This means you will have all the rights contained in the procedure such as representation at the investigatory interview.

EXTERNAL ADVICE

This procedure is intended to provide an effective way for you to expose mal-practice in the workplace. If you are not satisfied with the procedure, wish to seek advice from outside the Council, or are not satisfied with the Council's response to something you have raised, it is possible for you to raise your concerns with an organisation called PUBLIC CONCERN AT WORK. This is a registered Charity that provides free advice for employees who wish to express concerns about fraud or other serious mal-practice.

They can be contacted on ☎ **020 7404 6609** and their address is:-

**Public Concern at Work
Suite 301
16 Balwins Gardens
London EC1N 7RJ**

Alternatively if you have concerns about fraud or corruption you can contact the Councils External Auditor Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2a Hunter Road, Pegasus Park, Castle Donnington (ref Leicestershire County Council Audit), ☎ **01509 604040** or you can contact the Audit Commission Complaints and PIDA Manager, Westward House, Lime Kiln Close, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8SR, or ring their special confidential telephone line on ☎ **0845 052 2646**.