

Home > Your Council > The Council > Blackpool Council whistleblowing policy

Blackpool Council whistleblowing policy and procedures

Last Modified May 14, 2025



How to search the page

iOS Safari – tap the action icon (square with arrow at bottom of screen) and select ‘find on page’ from the list of options.

Other mobile browsers – tap the browser’s options menu (usually 3 dots or lines) and select ‘find on page’ from the options.

CTRL + F on your keyboard (Command + F on a Mac)

This will open a search box on the page. Type the word you are looking for in the search box and press enter. The word will then be highlighted wherever it appears in the guidance. Use the navigation in the search box to move to the next word found.

How to print a copy of the page

iOS Safari – tap the action icon (square with arrow at bottom of screen) and select ‘print’ from the list of options.

Other mobile browsers – tap the browser’s options menu (usually 3 dots or lines) and select ‘print’ or select ‘share’ from the list of options, then ‘print’ in the popup.

CTRL + P on your keyboard (Command + P on a Mac)

You have an option to print the entire page, or select a page range.

Whistleblowing policy

1. The council's values

1.1 Blackpool Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, professionalism and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the council's work, to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy is integral to the ethos of the council and its core values in particular:

'We act with integrity and we are trustworthy in all our dealings with people and we are open about the decisions and the services we offer'.

1.2 Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the council. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the council or that it is easier to ignore the concern rather than report it. They may also fear bullying, harassment or victimisation. This policy is aimed at making sure, as far as reasonably practicable there is a safe environment to raise issues of concern.

2. Employee obligations

2.1 All employees have a legal and moral responsibility to report improper acts and omissions. In some circumstances, failure to raise such concerns may amount to breach of contract or breaking the law.

2.2 Anyone who raises a concern (if it is a qualifying disclosure) is protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which is incorporated into the Employment Rights Act 1996. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or ‘blowing the whistle’ outside.

3. Application of the policy

3.1 The policy applies to all employees, elected members and those contractors working for the council on its premises, for example, volunteers, agency staff, builders etc. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the council in their own premises, for example, care homes.

3.2 The holding of any data in connection with this procedure will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.

4. Aims of the policy

4.1 This policy aims to:

- Encourage people to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice, including those that are made in the public interest
- Provide guidelines for people to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
- Ensure that people receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied
- Reassure people that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation

5. Areas the policy covers

5.1 The following are the areas of disclosure that would be covered under this policy:

- Criminal offence - for example, if an employer has been trying to bribe people
- The breach of a legal obligation by an organisation - for example, if an employer has neglected their duty of care towards children in a care home
- Miscarriage of justice - for example, if a member of staff has been fired for something that turned out to be a computer error
- Someone's health and safety being in danger - for example, if an employer has forced staff to serve food they know has been contaminated
- Damage to the environment - for example, if an employer has been regularly polluting local rivers

5.2 A whistleblowing concern can also be raised about someone trying to cover up information about any of issues above.

5.3 It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist employees who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or management decisions taken by the council, nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been, or are currently being, addressed under the bullying, harassment, complaints, grievance, disciplinary or other procedures. This includes concerns about breaches of an employee's own employment contract which should be dealt with using the grievance procedure.

5.4 Sometimes the concern raised can be a personal grievance rather than a whistleblowing complaint. Any raised concern under this policy has to be in the public interest. [Further guidance on whistleblowing and grievances to help make the distinction clear.](#)

5.5 Details of the council's employee complaints (grievance procedure) can be found in Appendix 5.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an employee's identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, an employee may need to be a witness, for instance if the matter leads to a disciplinary hearing or a criminal prosecution.

6.2 In some cases, confidentiality may not be possible. For instance, if you report abuse or a criminal offence, then the person you tell may have to take some action. If it does become necessary to reveal your identity, you will be consulted before this action is taken. If there is an unauthorised disclosure of your identity, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

7. Anonymous allegations

7.1 The procedure encourages employees to put their name to an allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much harder to investigate but will be considered at the discretion of the monitoring officer (contact details in Appendix 1). In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include the seriousness of the issues raised and the credibility of the concern.

7.2 It should be noted that anonymous whistleblowers will not be able to receive feedback and that actions taken to look into the disclosure could be limited.

8. Untrue allegations

8.1 If an employee makes an allegation, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however,

an employee makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

9. Harassment or victimisation

9.1 The council is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees making the decision to report a concern. If an employee believes that what they are saying is true, they should have nothing to fear they will be doing their duty to their employer and those for whom they are providing a service.

9.2 The council will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect employees when they raise a concern.

9.3 Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary, redundancy or other procedures that already affect employees.

10. Support for employees

10.1 Employees who raise concerns or who are the subject of an investigation can access confidential counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme - further details are included in Appendix 5.

Whistleblowing procedure

11. How to raise a concern

11.1 You should raise this in the first instance with your line manager. The earlier you raise your concern, the easier it will be to take action. Evidence does not need to be provided for your concerns to be raised and considered. Remember, if in doubt, raise it.

11.2 If you feel unable to raise the issue with your line manager, or if your line manager does not act on your referral, you should approach your departmental whistleblowing contact - see Appendix 1.

11.3 Whether or not it will be considered reasonable for you to be able to discuss the issue with your manager depends on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice. For instance, if you have previously attempted, unsuccessfully, to raise the issue with your manager or where, you believe that the malpractice will only be dealt with by reporting it elsewhere, then you should raise your concerns directly with your departmental whistleblowing contact - see Appendix 1.

11.4 You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague in some circumstances, as it can be easier to raise concerns if there is more than one witness.

11.5 You are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at any meetings or interviews in connection with concerns you have raised. If your chosen representative is someone who is a witness, or clearly someone who will need to be interviewed in his or her own right, an alternative should be chosen.

12. Line managers

12.1 Managers have a responsibility to ensure that concerns are taken seriously and should support their direct reports in referring the matter to the departmental whistleblowing contact to then raise with the expert panel.

13. Departmental contacts/Designated whistleblowing contact

13.1 If you feel unable to talk to your line manager (because of circumstances outlined above), you should contact one of the departmental whistleblowing contacts directly listed in Appendix 1 and formally inform them of your concerns. You may be asked to complete a referral using the form in Appendix 3.

13.2 This person (the 'designated whistleblowing contact') will then refer your concern to an expert panel using the form set out in Appendix 4. Guidance may be given if it is considered more appropriate to raise your concern under an existing procedure, as outlined in Appendix 5.

13.3 If you would rather contact someone outside your own department, then one of the other departmental contacts listed in Appendix 1 can be contacted who will make the referral on your behalf (this will then become your designated whistleblowing contact). You may be asked to complete a referral using the form in Appendix 3.

13.4 A further trigger for convening the panel would be a referral from the employee relations team immediately when a member of that team becomes aware of an employee complaint/grievance submission which may meet the whistleblowing definitions within this policy. This referral would go to Head of Human Resources who would convene the panel.

13.5 The Designated whistleblowing contact (or HR advisor if raised via the employee relations team) will write to you within ten working days (wherever reasonable possible) of a concern being raised to:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received
- Indicate how the matter will be dealt with (e.g. a referral to the expert panel)
- Where applicable, give an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Inform you about staff support mechanisms.

14. Expert panel

14.1 The panel would consist of:

- Monitoring officer (Chair)
- Head of audit and risk
- Head of human resources

14.2 In the event of a member of the panel not being available or having a conflict of interest then a designated deputy will substitute for the panel member. Details of the above panel members are set out in Appendix 1, procedural contacts.

14.3 The panel would be convened as and when required. The designated whistleblowing contact who has submitted the referral on behalf of the complainant will attend the panel to act as the link person with the complainant. For a referral from the employee relations team then the attendee will be the relevant HR adviser.

14.4 The role of the panel would be to review the complaint and determine whether or not it falls under the whistleblowing criteria - if it is deemed not to be a clear rationale as to why, will be documented for sharing with the complainant and suggestions will be made as to how the concerns should be taken forward in another way.

14.5 If it is accepted under the policy, the panel will:

- Determine any immediate communication required to complainant for example regarding support
- Agree and document next steps required
- Agree which member of the panel will provide additional oversight of the case to ensure it progresses in accordance with policy and timelines (panel members will share this responsibility so it will rotate)

14.6 The expert panel will try to ensure consensus on any decision it needs to consider but as the responsible officer, the monitoring officer (or in their absence the deputy monitoring officer) will make the final decision.

15. How the expert panel will respond

15.1 The panel will respond to any concern raised via the designated whistleblowing contact. Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- Be investigated by management or risk services
- Be investigated under another procedure, eg child/adult protection
- Be referred to the Lancashire Constabulary
- Be referred to the monitoring officer
- Be referred to the external auditor
- Form the subject of an independent inquiry

15.2 The expert panel, if it agrees that the referral meets whistleblowing criteria, will appoint an investigating officer who will investigate your concern. Managers of investigating officers must make reasonable allowances as regards time and workload to enable them to carry out a thorough and swift investigation.

15.3 If, during the investigation, you are concerned about what progress is being made, require support or reassurance, or feel you may be being victimised or harassed as a result of making the disclosure, you should contact your designated whistleblowing contact.

15.4 In order that you can be assured that your concern has been properly addressed, then - subject to legal constraints and following the investigation - the designated whistleblowing contact will write to you to inform you of the outcome. However, this will not include details of any disciplinary action, which will remain confidential to the individual/s concerned.

16. The responsible officer

16.1 The assistant chief executive (governance), in their role as monitoring officer (see Appendix 1) has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and procedure. Designated whistleblowing contacts will report all concerns reported under this procedure. The monitoring officer will keep a record of all concerns raised and the outcomes and will report to the council's standards committee on an annual basis or more often, as appropriate.

17. How the matter can be taken further - disclosure to regulatory bodies

17.1 This procedure is intended to provide you with an avenue within the council to raise concerns. If you feel that your concern has not been dealt with satisfactorily and that it is right to take the matter outside the council, then you should seek advice from the internal contact point in the first instance.

17.2 If you still feel that the matter has not been dealt with satisfactorily then there are a number of possible external contact points, further details of which are given in Appendix 2.

17.3 A disclosure to a regulatory body will be protected in line with [Part IV of the Employment Rights Act 1996 - the Public Interest Disclosure Act](#) if you have a reasonable belief that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur and you honestly and reasonably believe that the information and any allegation within it are substantially true.

17.4 If you do take the matter outside of the council, you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information unless it is considered in the public interest to do so. It should be noted that a confidentiality clause in an agreement does not prevent a worker from making a disclosure as long as it is in the public interest. Please check with your internal or external contact for clarification on these points.

Appendix 1: Internal contacts

Departmental contacts/designated whistleblowing contacts

Department	Name and contact details	Department	Name and contact details
Children's services	Kara Haskayne , Head of service Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 01253 477304 kara.haskayne@blackpool.gov.uk	Schools	Jacqueline Currey Governor services manager. Number One Bickerstaffe Square 01253 476513 jacqueline.currey@blackpool.gov.uk
Adult services	Nick Henson, Assistant director Adult Services, Number One Bickerstaffe Square . 01253 477379 Nick.henson@blackpool.gov.uk	Chief executive	Scott Butterfield Strategy and climate lead Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 07881 281237 Scott.butterfield@blackpool.gov.uk
Resources	Louise Jones Head of revenues, benefits and customer services , Municipal Buildings 01253 478885 louise.jones@blackpool.gov.uk	Public health	Judith Mills Consultant in public health Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 01253 476368 judith.mills@blackpool.gov.uk
Communications and regeneration	Vanda de Freitas Head of work and health programmes, Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 01253 477300 Vands.defreitas@blackpool.gov.uk	Community and environmental services	Amanda Jones Administration and quality manager, Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 01253 478479 amanda.jones@blackpool.gov.uk

Procedural contacts

Lorraine Hurst

Monitoring officer, assistant chief executive (governance)/Monitoring officer, Number One Bickerstaffe Square
01253 477127

Email: monitoring.officer@blackpool.gov.uk

Tracy Greenhalgh

Head of audit and risk, 4th Floor, Number One Bickerstaffe Square 01253 478554 or 07342 032174

Email: tracy.greenhalgh@blackpool.gov.uk

Claire Smith

Head of HR and workforce development, 4th Floor, Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 07780 471760

Email: claire.smith@blackpool.gov.uk

Tracey Lovick

Senior health and safety adviser , 4th Floor, Number One Bickerstaffe Square. 01253 477264 or 07909 001355

Email: tracey.lovick@blackpool.gov.uk

Employee relations team

Human resources, 2nd Floor, Number One Bickerstaffe Square 01253 477230 Email: employeerelations@blackpool.gov.uk

Appendix 2: External organisations/regulatory bodies (and the matters they would deal with)

Organisation	Matters dealt with
Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA)	Proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in local government and health service bodies
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills	Matters relating to the regulation and inspection of establishments and agencies for children's social care services
Certification officer	Fraud and other irregularities, relating to the financial affairs of trade unions and employers' associations
The Charity Commission for England and Wales	Administration of charities and of funds given or held for charitable purposes
Care Quality Commission	The administration of adult social care services
Commissioners for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	About the administration of UK taxes; the administration of N.I. and tax credits systems; custom and border-related functions and criminal investigations
The Controller and Auditor General	About the proper conduct of public business, value for money, fraud and corruption in relation to the provision of public services
The Environment Agency	Acts or omissions which have an actual or potential effect on the environment
Health and Safety Executive	Health and safety of individuals at work, or the health and safety of the public arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work
The Pensions Regulatory	The protection of members' benefits under occupational and private pensions schemes

Local Government Ombudsman	Council maladministration
Children's Commissioner	Matters relating to the rights, welfare and interests of children in England
The Information Commissioner	Compliance with the requirement of legislation relating to data protection and to freedom of information

[For further information - see government guidance:](#)

Appendix 3 - Whistleblowing reporting form

If you need this form in an accessible/alternative format please contact employeerelations@blackpool.gov.uk

Description of the concern:

Where possible include:

- Dates of incidents
- Who was involved
- Why this is a concern
- Whether there were any other witnesses
- Whether you have tried to raise this with your manager
- What the result was

You are encouraged to put your name to this report. Concerns expressed anonymously are much harder to investigate but will be considered at the discretion of the monitoring officer.

Your contact details:

Name:

Address:

Department/organisation:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Date:

[To be completed by designated whistleblowing contact on receipt of report]

Designated whistleblowing contact name:

Date of receipt:

Department:

Reference:

Appendix 4 - Record of advice/action by the designated whistleblowing contact

To be completed by designated whistleblowing contact on receipt of report

Designated officer:

Department:

Reference:

Description of the concern:

Where possible include:

- Dates of incidents
- Who was involved
- Why this is a concern
- Whether there were any other witnesses
- Whether this was raised with the line manager
- What the result was

Advice given (including if no further action was taken):

Please note: Whistleblowing contacts must report all concerns reported under this procedure to the monitoring officer who will keep a record of all concerns raised and the outcomes.

Appendix 5 - Existing council procedures to raise issues of concern outside of the whistleblowing procedure

There may be an existing procedure for you to follow which is specifically intended to address your specific area of concern and unless, in good faith, you feel unable to, you should follow the appropriate procedures:

Issue	Existing procedure
Employment matters	Employee complaints (Grievance procedure) The procedure does not cover the following subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To appeal against disciplinary action or capability procedures (see separate procedures)• To appeal against your job grading• To appeal against being selected for redundancy• For any matter concerning the terms of a collective agreement• To challenge decisions taken outside of the council, such as on tax and national insurance matters or changes in the law
Bullying or harassment	Respecting people at work framework.
Discrimination	Equality policy framework (Workforce)
Health and safety	Please contact your departmental health and safety officer or the health and safety manager
General council complaints	Customer feedback policy
Adult social care complaints	Adult social care customer feedback procedure
Children's social care	Children services customer feedback procedure
Concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult	Adult social care: 01253 477592 Children's services: 01253 477299 or email duty.assessment@blackpool.gov.uk
Corporate fraud (suspicions in relation to a colleague, a contractor or a member of the public)	Corporate fraud reporting form

Contact the National Benefit Fraud Hotline by:

Benefit fraud

- Telephone on 0800 854 440. Your call is free and confidential you do not have to give your name or address. Lines are open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm. If you have speech or hearing problems you can use a text phone service on 0800 328 0512 or Welsh speakers can call on 0800 678 3722.
- Online at: www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud
- Post: NBFH, PO Box 224, Preston PR1 1GP

Additional contacts and information

Organisation	Telephone number
Human resources, Employee relations team	01253 477230
Unison branch office	01253 478492
Unite	01253 476349
GMB	07870 176 746
Customer relations team	01253 477700 Email customer.relations@blackpool.gov.uk
Corporate fraud team	01253 478554 Email corporate.fraud@blackpool.gov.uk
Employee Assistance Programme	<p>The Employee Assistance Programme is provided by Health Assured, an independent organisation offering a free confidential telephone helpline. This includes access to counselling if appropriate as well as access to debt and legal advice. This service is available for employees and their immediate families * 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.</p> <p>Contact can be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By Phone: 0800 028 0199 (or add prefix 0044 to call from outside UK - stating they are a UK based employee, calls will be charged) Access to Mincom is arranged via scheduling a consultation using the email address or contact facility on the webpage.• By App : Download the Health Assured Wisdom app via Google play or Apple store using the code MH A051861 - Here you can access "live chat" facility or request a call back• For employees <p>Please note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council issued mobile phones will have the app automatically downloaded• Due to HRMC rules and regulations EAP is only offered to employees, partners of employees, retirees for up to three months after they have left the organisation and dependants who are between the ages of 16 to 24 years old in full education living at the same house hold address as the employee.

Blackpool Council

Municipal Buildings
Corporation Street
Blackpool
FY1 1NF

Information and help

Accessibility
Contact us
Privacy and cookies
Terms and conditions
Blackpool Council companies

Find my nearest

Enter your postcode to find your nearest schools, council services and more

search

Stay upto date

Sign up to our regular newsletters

Follow us

