

What if I fear harassment or victimisation? How will I be protected?

The decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation as outlined in its "Dignity at Work Policy" and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in the public interest.

What if I change my mind?

You may withdraw from the process at any stage, although your involvement may still be required in certain circumstances such as ongoing disciplinary or legal proceedings. If you do wish to withdraw you or your representative must inform the person with whom you raised the initial concern and the investigating officer. You will be requested to provide a reason/(s) for your withdrawal.

If you withdraw from the process on-going investigations into the issues arising from your concern may continue dependent on the nature of the issues and the results of the investigation findings at that time.

How can I be assured of confidentiality?

The Council will endeavour to maintain confidentiality where possible, but this cannot be guaranteed. Depending on the nature of the concern in order to undertake a proper investigation confidential information may have to be shared with a third party, including the party or parties' subject of the concern. You will be informed if this is necessary.

What if my concern is unfounded?

If you raise an issue in the public interest, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against employees and members will be referred to the Monitoring Officer and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedures.

What if a concern is raised about me?

You will be informed of the concern if and when appropriate (subject to current HR procedures). You will be supported in an appropriate manner and will be informed as appropriate, in respect to the investigation.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

This policy provides you with an avenue to raise concerns within the Council. The Council hopes you will be satisfied with the response to your concern. If you are not satisfied you must inform the Managing Director, with the reasons for your dissatisfaction.

Contacts:

- Your Local Council Member (if you are an employee and live in the area of the Council) - if you are not sure who this is contact Member Services on **01952 380110** or use the Council's internet site (www.telford.gov.uk)
- External Auditor - KPMG **0121 335 2440**
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- The Local Government Ombudsman **0300 061 0614** (www.lgo.org.uk)
- The Health & Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk
- Your solicitor
- The Police **08457 444888**
- Public Concern at Work **0207 404 6609** (www.pcaw.co.uk)
- Trade Union/Professional Association – details are available from Human Resources.

Copies of the full Speak Up Policy can be found on the Intranet under Internal Audit, Whistleblowing/Speak Up.

Speak Up Hotline 01952 383115



A guide to the Speak Up Policy

Speak Up

What is the policy about?

The Policy is intended to encourage you as an employee, elected member, volunteer, school governor, partner, agency staff, supplier or contractor to raise issues that are of serious concern within the Council. The Council needs you to speak up rather than ignoring something that may require action. The policy aims to:

- encourage you to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about malpractice;
- encourage you to raise these concerns as soon as they arise so that appropriate action can be taken;
- provide avenues for you to raise those concerns within the Council and receive feedback on any action taken;
- allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the Council's response; and
- reassure you that we will take action to protect you from reprisals or victimisation for speaking up in the public interest.

What if my concern is about my employment?

The Council's grievance procedure is in place to enable employees to lodge a grievance relating to their employment.

What types of concern does the Speak Up Policy cover?

A concern may be something that you think

- is unlawful;
- is against the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and policies;
- is improper use of public funds;
- is below the established standards or values of the Council;
- amounts to improper conduct.

Examples of concerns include:

- possible fraud and corruption,
- theft,
- dangerous procedures risking health and safety,
- abuse of clients/pupils,
- evasion of statutory responsibilities,
- damage to the environment,
- discriminatory behaviour,
- other perceived unethical conduct.

The overriding principle should be that it would be in the Council's and public interest for the practice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions applied.

How do I raise a concern?

If you are an employee, volunteer, agency staff or partner you may raise the matter with:

- The Investigations Team (investigations@telford.gov.uk) or anonymously in writing (Ground Floor, Wing A, Darby House) or Speak Up hotline **01952 383115**
- your Manager, Head of Establishment/Headteacher,
- the Council's Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director – Governance, Procurement & Commissioning),
- a Trade Union Representative.

What if my concern involves my line manager?

If your concern is connected with your direct line manager/supervisor then the Investigations team are experienced and independent from your service area and can advise or your Human Resources Officer will be able to help.

If you are a school governor, you may raise the matter with:

- the Director of Children's and Adults Services, Assistant Director - Education & Corporate Parenting, the Investigation Team or the Monitoring Officer.

If you are a supplier or contractor you may raise the matter with:

- the Corporate & Vulnerable People Procurement & Brokerage SDM,
- the Investigations Team or
- Council's Monitoring Officer.

If you are an elected member you may raise the matter with:

- the Council's Monitoring Officer

Concerns can also be raised by using the Council's Everyday App which includes options for raising concerns in relation to fraud.

Just use the link http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20221/everyday_telford/215/everyday_telford

Does the concern have to be in writing?

Concerns are better in writing (written or email). You should set out the background and history of the concern giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation.

What if I do not feel able to put the concern in writing?

If you do not feel able to put your concern in writing, you can telephone or meet with the appropriate officer as specified above. Alternatively you can leave a message on the 24 hour Speak Up hotline number **01952 383115**. This service is secure and you do not have to give your name if you do not want to.

The earlier you express the concern and the more detail you give us, the easier it will be to take action but we will look into all matters reported under this policy.

Can I remain anonymous?

Yes it is up to you if you wish to provide contact details or not.

Can I ask someone else to raise the concern on my behalf?

YES. You may ask your Trade Union or other representative to raise a matter on your behalf.

What will happen if I raise a concern?

This will depend on what it is. The matters raised maybe:

- investigated internally by an appropriately skilled and experienced officer, knowledgeable in the area concerned;
- referred to the Police;
- referred to the External Auditor or the Local Government Ombudsman

To protect individuals and the Council an initial assessment will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection, discrimination issues or other specific protocols) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

What is the procedure if I raise a concern?

For referrals that have contact details these will be acknowledged within 3 working days and feedback will be provided at an appropriate time. Generally investigators will not need to contact you during the investigation process but if further information is required from you then contact will be made in an appropriate and discreet manner (this could be by telephone or by a meeting at an agreed neutral location).

How will the Council support me?

The Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern and provide any appropriate support including the Council's confidential Counselling Service.

How will I know the outcome?

The Council understands that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly dealt with. Unless there is a legal reason why it can't be done, you will receive information about the outcomes of investigations and any changes to procedures that have been made if we have your contact details.