

Haringey Fraud Response Plan

1. Why we have a Fraud Response Plan

- 1.1 Haringey Council is committed to developing a culture of honesty and zero tolerance to fraud and corruption.
- 1.2 In line with that commitment, the Council's Anti-Fraud Strategy outlines how we aim to prevent, investigate and report on fraud and corruption.
- 1.3 This Fraud Response Plan supports the Council's approach by setting out the ways in which individuals or organisations can make their concerns known about suspected fraud or corruption. It also outlines how the Council will deal with such instances.

2. What we want to know about

- 2.1 This Fraud Response Plan is intended to be put in place where concerns about fraud or corruption have been raised. The definition of **Fraud** is based on the Fraud Act 2006 which introduced three specific offences of fraud: fraud by false representation; fraud by failing to disclose information; and fraud by abuse of position. **Corruption** is defined as: "The offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward, which may influence the action of any person".
- 2.2 Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of other procedures, e.g. grievances about an employee's own employment, mistreatment of vulnerable clients, or acts of discrimination, will usually be referred to the relevant department and dealt with under those procedures.
- 2.3 Fraudulent or corrupt acts may include:
 - Where a process or system is likely to be abused by either employees or public, e.g. allocation of housing or other accommodation
 - Where individuals or companies have fraudulently obtained money from the Council, e.g. by submitting invalid invoices, or false applications for council tax or business rate reductions and refunds, or Housing Benefit fraud
 - Where individuals or organisations have fraudulently obtained property or other assets from the Council, e.g. by submitting false applications for housing
 - Where Council equipment is used for personal use, e.g. personal use of Council vehicles, or IT equipment
 - Where there is a misuse of resources, e.g. theft of building materials, working whilst off sick, false overtime or flexi-time claims
 - Activities undertaken by officers of the Council which may be illegal, or against the Council's Constitution or policies, e.g. receiving gifts or hospitality
- 2.4 The above list cannot cover every example of fraud or corruption. If you have any questions, please contact the Head of Audit and Risk Management for further advice and guidance (Tel: 020 8489 3768).

3. How we protect those people who raise concerns

3.1 Confidentiality

We will try to protect a person's identity when he or she raises a concern and does not want their name to be revealed. However, in some cases, the investigation process itself may reveal the source of the information. Also, the person may be required to make a statement either as part of the investigation process, or to provide evidence for any disciplinary hearing, or criminal prosecution.

3.2 Harassment or Bullying

We understand that reporting any concerns may be a difficult decision to make, especially if the individual is worried about suffering harassment or bullying from those responsible for carrying out the fraud or corruption. We will not tolerate harassment or bullying and our disciplinary procedures and our policy on harassment and bullying support this. We will take action to protect those who raise a concern in good faith.

3.3 Anonymous Allegations

We would always encourage people come forward to discuss their concerns with us directly. Concerns raised anonymously may be much less convincing, but, depending on the seriousness of the issues raised and the amount of information provided, we will still consider investigating the concern further. However, unless we are able to confirm the allegation from other sources, we may not be able to undertake a full investigation.

3.4 Untrue Allegations

A concern may be raised in good faith by some-one, but it is not found to be the case by the subsequent investigation. No action will be taken against the person who raised the original concern. However, if people make allegations they know to be untrue, we may consider taking further action against those individuals making the allegations.

4. What should an employee or Councillor do if they suspect fraud or corruption?

4.1 Employees and Councillors are often the first to realise when things may be going wrong, or fraud and corruption may be taking place. However, they may feel that they would not be supported by colleagues or managers, if they raised their concerns, or they may even be afraid of being harassed or bullied. In these circumstances, an individual may feel it would be easier to ignore their concerns, rather than report it.

4.2 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise concerns within the Council, rather than overlooking a problem. The policy applies to all Haringey employees, staff of Council contractors, agency staff and trainees.

4.3 This policy has been discussed with the relevant Trade Unions and professional organisations and has their support. A copy of the Whistleblowing Policy is attached to the Anti-fraud and corruption strategy, and is available on the Council's

website and intranet site, or can be obtained from Human Resources, or your Trade Union Representative.

4.4 If an employee suspects fraud, they should raise their concern with their line manager. Failing that, the employee should approach their line manager's manager, or the Director. If the employee cannot raise their concern within their department, they should approach Internal Audit, their HR Business Partner, or the Head of Legal Services.

4.5 The nature of the complaint will determine the Council's course of action and the employee's concerns may be investigated by service management, Internal Audit, or Personnel.

4.6 Audit and Risk Management can be contacted at:

Level 1, Alexandra House,
10 Station Road, Wood Green,
London, N22 7TR
Telephone: 020 8489 3768
Email: fraudcall@haringey.gov.uk

5. What should a member of the public or a partner organisation do if they suspect fraud or corruption?

5.1 The Council encourages members of the public or a partner organisation who suspect fraud and corruption to contact the Council's Head of Legal Services or Audit and Risk Management in the first instance.

5.2 Audit and Risk Management operates independently of all other Council departments. Contact details for Audit and Risk Management are set out at paragraph 4.6 above.

5.3 The Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP) has its own arrangements for confidential reporting and whistleblowing. These are approved by the HSP Board and are publicised on the HSP website. The Council acts as the lead organisation for the HSP, and also for receiving and investigating any concerns raised through the HSP whistleblowing process. Internal Audit work closely with the HSP to ensure that any issues which may affect the Council are dealt with appropriately.

5.4 The possible courses of action taken by the Council are outlined in section 6 below.

6. How will allegations of fraud or corruption be dealt with by the council?

6.1 For issues raised by employees or members of the public, the action taken by the Council will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may be investigated internally, or referred to the Police.

6.2 We cannot say how every individual case will be dealt with. However, the Council does have a Disciplinary Code of Practice which sets out the general processes for in disciplinary cases. We will comply fully with this Code in our investigations. As a general guide, we will use the following approach to ensure that clear lines of

communication are in place, ensure that appropriate people and specialists are involved at the right times, and confidentiality is maintained. We will:

- Inform the relevant manager of the allegation;
- Undertake an initial review to see if the allegation could be true;
- Advise the relevant manager of the results of the initial review and agree whether there needs to be any further investigation;
- Inform the Personnel Department of the investigation to date and agree whether the employee should be suspended from work to allow for further investigations to take place;
- Agree an approach with the manager and personnel to complete the investigation, together with any relevant timescales;
- Produce a final report on the findings of the investigation, which will say whether any breaches of the Council's procedures, regulations, or Code of Conduct have taken place.

6.3 Within ten working days of a concern being received, the responsible officer will write to the complainant:

- Acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- Indicating how they propose to deal with the matter;
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response; and
- Provide individuals with information on staff support mechanisms.

6.4 The Council accepts that those people who reported the alleged fraud or corruption need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints, the Council will inform the person raising the concern about the progress and outcome of any investigation.

7. Alternative methods for raising concerns

7.1 If either an individual, member of a partner organisation or the public, or an employee feels that it is right to take the matter outside these processes, the following are possible ways forward:

- **your local Councillor** – If you live within Haringey, your Councillor can be contacted at their regular surgery in your area. If you are not sure which is your Councillor, visit our website, www.haringey.gov.uk or call 020 8489 2947. You can also write to your councillor at: Member Services, Level 5, River Park House, 225 High Road, Wood Green, N22 8HQ.
- **the council's external auditors (Grant Thornton)** – These are appointed to review and comment on the Council's finances and performance. By law, they must be completely independent from the Council. They can be contacted at paul.dossett@gtuk.com.
- **your Trade Union** – employees may invite their Trade Union to raise a matter on their behalf.

- **the Police** – suspicions of fraud or corruption may be reported directly to the Police.