



Introduction

Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP) is committed to the highest standards of quality, probity, openness and accountability.

As part of that commitment, the HSP encourages those who work with the partnership who have serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and express those concerns. In many cases, concerns or complaints will be dealt with via our normal procedures including those to deal with grievances, disciplinary matters, or concerns relating to equalities, bullying or harassment. These concerns may also be dealt with through the employing organisation's policies and procedures.

However, the HSP recognises that, in some cases, individuals will need and want to come forward on a confidential basis to discuss or disclose issues which relate to the operation of the HSP. The HSP's code of governance makes it clear that individuals can do so without fear of reprisals.

This policy is intended to reinforce the HSP's commitment to the process and our support for those who come forward to express their concerns. The key message we want to publicise is that we expect all HSP members, Councillors, employees, consultants, contractors, and service users, to be honest, and to give the HSP any help, information and support we need to deal with issues of concern.

Whistleblowing and confidential reporting policy

Members of an organisation are usually the first to know when something is going seriously wrong - be it a serious danger to the public or a major fraud. All too often the alarm is not sounded on malpractice. The result is that the people in charge do not get the chance to take action before real damage is done. The HSP encourages individuals to report their concerns early and in confidence to enable the issue to be dealt with as effectively as possible. However, it is recognised that there could be situations where concerns are raised after the event, so the policy is written to incorporate either circumstance.

Whistleblowing and confidential reporting policies aim to ensure that serious concerns are properly raised and addressed in the workplace and are increasingly recognised as a key tool to deliver good practice. It is essential for the HSP that a whistleblowing and confidential reporting policy/procedure is in place and well publicised so everyone connected with the organisation is aware of what is required of them.

How to identify issues of concern

Through the HSP partners' procedures, we feel sure that you will know how to recognise the following problems and that you understand the effects that they may have on the HSP and partner organisations and the services that we provide:

- Fraud and corruption
- Abuse or neglect of vulnerable people
- Failure to deliver proper standards of service
- Damaging personal conflicts
- Bullying, discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in the workplace

When a problem arises, we will always take it seriously. We will always pursue serious abuses as vigorously as possible through our partners' disciplinary procedures. We want you to feel confident in coming forward, that we will take your concerns seriously and take appropriate action when you tell us things are wrong.

Confidential Reporting

The HSP recognises that it can be difficult to report a concern, but we would urge anyone who has any concerns to come forward at an early stage, and before problems have a chance to become bigger.

Reporting a concern alone can seem a daunting prospect, so the HSP is happy for you to come forward with a colleague or other representative. The HSP supports all its members, including staff, and reporting a concern will not affect your position. This applies equally if some-one comes forward, in good faith, with a concern that turns out later not to be justified.

In some instances, a person reporting their concerns may wish to remain anonymous. On other occasions, a person may wish to have his or her information treated confidentially, but will be prepared to supply their own details. The HSP encourages open reporting, namely where the identity of the person reporting is known, but makes provision for other methods to improve people's confidence in the HSP's systems and their willingness to report their concerns.

The HSP will do everything it can to respect and maintain your confidentiality. We will deal with all information fairly and confidentially. We will try, as far as possible, not to reveal the names of the people who gave us the information. If anyone tries to discourage an individual from coming forward we will treat this as an offence. Equally, concerns must be raised in good faith and without malicious intent. Anyone who makes malicious allegations will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

All allegations will be investigated thoroughly by the relevant HSP officer who will respect the confidentiality of the person raising the concern and the individual against whom the allegation has been raised.

Who to contact

In most cases, you should be able to raise any concerns with the Chair of the HSP, or the Chair of the relevant HSP Theme Board. All such contacts will be treated in confidence. If a concern relates to the Chair, then it should be referred to the respective Vice-Chair of HSP or Theme Board. For advice or help in the first

instance you can contact Mary Connolly, HSP Partnership Manager on 020 8933 6368 or email: mary.connolly@haringey.gov.uk .

If the HSP's policies and procedures are working properly, you should not need to take your concern to any external agency. There may be exceptional circumstances where this may be the best approach. For example, if a criminal offence has been committed, then the police should be advised.

Investigating concerns

Following an allegation, where appropriate, an independent and impartial HSP officer will be involved in the investigation. The investigating officer will make sure that the investigation is carried out as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

Once an investigation commences, every effort will be made to bring it to an early conclusion. To conduct an investigation under the Whistleblowing and Confidential Reporting Policy, officers will follow the same process as the Disciplinary Procedures for investigating cases of misconduct/gross misconduct. An investigation may conclude that, potentially, there has been a breach of the HSP's Code of Conduct. In these circumstances, the HSP's disciplinary process would be invoked. If the concern is a more serious nature then the parent organisation will be notified.

The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and you will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. The HSP will take steps to minimise any difficulties which you may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the HSP will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

The HSP accepts that you need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, we will inform you of the progress and outcome of any investigation.

If you raise a concern confidentially, then you too should treat the matter as confidential, both during and after any investigation. Details of the concerns and the investigation should not be discussed beyond those who need to know.

The HSP hopes that none of these procedures will ever be necessary, but they are in place and designed to support people in cases where circumstances may be difficult.
