



COUNTER FRAUD
Services

Lincolnshire County Council

Whistleblowing Annual Report

2015-16

21 November 2016



What we do best

Innovative assurance services

Specialists at internal audit

Comprehensive risk management

Experts in countering fraud

..... And what sets us apart

Unrivalled best value to our customers

Existing strong regional public sector partnership

Auditors with the knowledge and expertise to get the job done

Already working extensively with the not-for-profit and third sector



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The matters raised in this report are only those that came to our attention during the course of our work – there may be issues that we are not aware of because they did not form part of our work programme, were excluded from the scope of individual engagements or were not brought to our attention. The opinion is based solely the work undertaken as part of the agreed counter fraud plan.



Key Messages

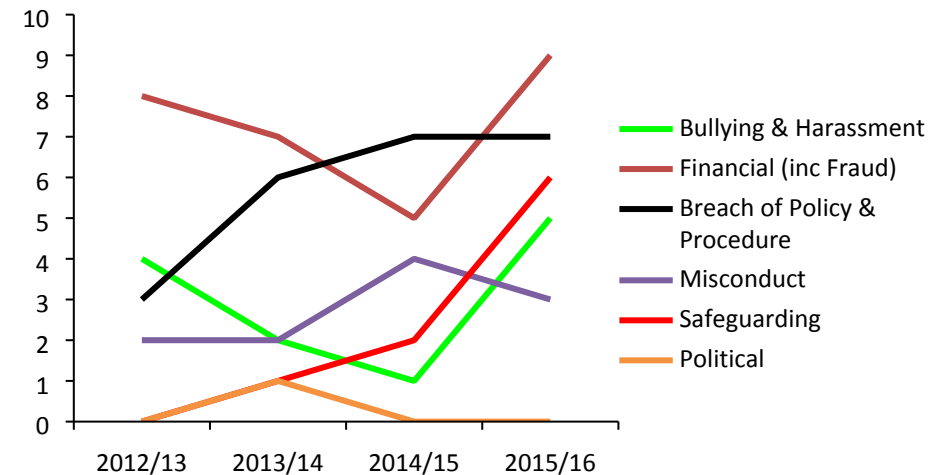
1. The trend in increasing usage of our whistleblowing facility has continued during 2015/16 – disclosures made have grown by 58% on the calls received in the previous year.
2. We have continued to promote awareness of the Council's Whistleblowing arrangements during 2015/16. The significant increase in concerns disclosed is evidence that our efforts to encourage reporting of concerns has been successful.
3. The Council's Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed and is presented for consultation (attached at Appendix B). Minor amendments have been made to reflect staffing changes – these have been highlighted for ease of reference. No further alterations are proposed.
4. We believe that these factors demonstrate the continued effectiveness of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements.

Whistleblowing disclosures 2015/16

5. During 2015/16 we received 30 whistleblowing disclosures. All disclosures were made through the Council's dedicated whistleblowing facility (either through the telephone hotline, e mail or PO Box address). Nine (30%) of the reports were made anonymously – this is largely in line with previous years. It is encouraging that 70% of callers 'blowing the whistle' were confident enough in our arrangements to provide their identity.

6. The analysis below shows the type and number of disclosures received over the last 4 years:

Analysis of disclosures - type and number

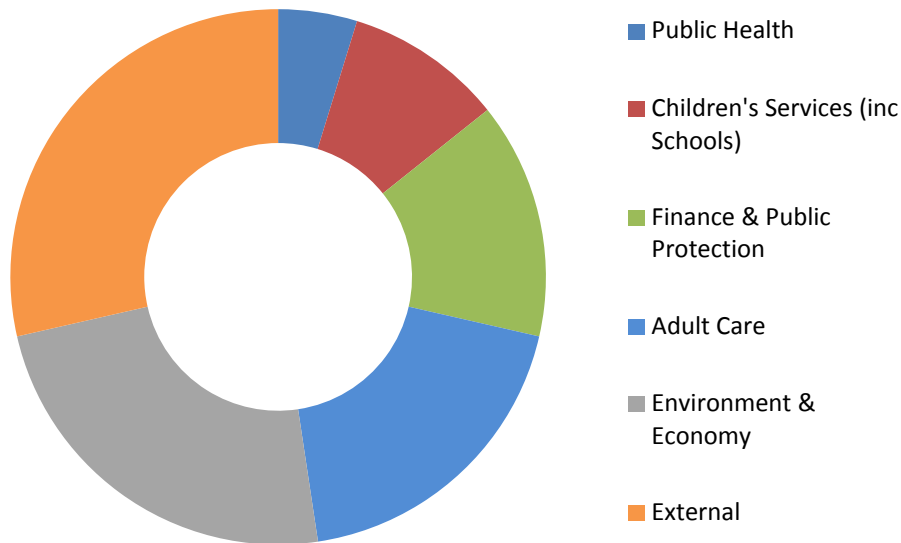


7. The chart demonstrates that 2015/16 saw increases in disclosures relating to bullying and harassment, financial issues and potential safeguarding matters. We have increased our promotion of fraud awareness so this may provide an explanation of the increased number of referrals relating to such cases – similarly we have increased our promotional efforts on social care fraud and safeguarding. However, we will monitor levels of reports on bullying and harassment as this area had previously seen a continuous fall in recent years.



8. The two most common factors in whistleblowing calls during 2015/16 were financial issues (including possible fraud) and alleged breaches of policies and procedures – this repeats a pattern identified within reports made in 2014/15.
9. The chart below provides an analysis of contact made across Council directorates:
10. The highest number of whistleblowing disclosures (19) relate to Children's Services – 12 of these cases related to concerns raised about schools. This pattern continues a consistent trend from previous years although the directorate has seen a slight increase from 58% to 64% of overall referrals. There has also been an increase in contact relating to Adult Care (from 11% to 22% of reports). However, the other directorates remain low in terms of reports made.

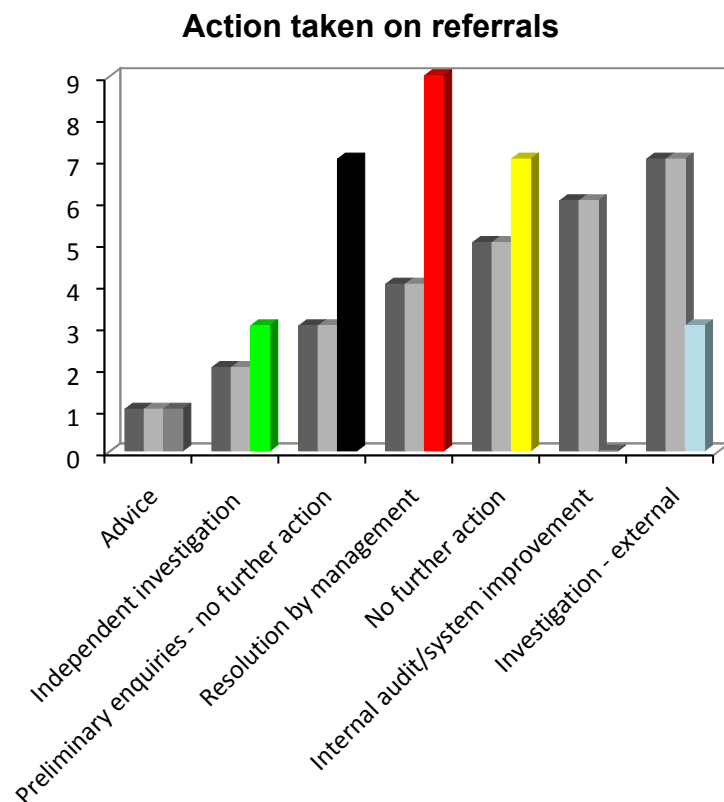
Referrals by Directorate - 2016/17



11. The table below shows how we dealt with the concerns raised



throughout 2015/16:



12. From the 30 disclosures made, one third (10) resulted in either preliminary enquiries or a full independent investigation by the Council's Investigation Team. The cases that required formal investigations related to misconduct or fraud concerns. 9 (30%) of

all cases reported were resolved by management – we believe that this is a positive outcome from concerns raised. Whistleblowers are also advised that they can contact the reporting line again should they feel that issues raised are not addressed properly. The remaining cases were resolved through:

- provision of advice
- callers redirected to other relevant policies or agencies
- no further action where insufficient information provided

13. Investigation outcomes:

The three formal investigations conducted resulted in the following outcomes:

- 2 cases – management action
- 1 disciplinary action – written warning given

Organisational Learning

14. The production, issue and monitoring implementation of action plans remains a key outcome from any investigation conducted – the purpose being to assist management in addressing any issues that arise from the investigations made. Timescales are agreed for each action and we follow up to ensure these have been complied with.

15. The 3 independent investigations arising from whistleblowing concerns in 2015/16 all took place in schools. There were no common themes and the team continues to work closely with the Executive Director of Children's Services to ensure that individual



matters are addressed and any trends or patterns reported and acted upon.

evidence that we are achieving success in our aim to embed a culture across employees and public where fraud is not acceptable.

Promotion of Whistleblowing Arrangements

16. We have continued to promote awareness of the authority's arrangements for whistleblowing. We have made further efforts to ensure that promotional posters are displayed throughout all council premises and that Whistleblowing leaflets are distributed to staff teams within the Council and are available in areas accessible by the public e.g. receptions.
17. We continue to work with procurement and contract management teams and intend to issue promotional material to service providers and contractors to ensure they are aware of the Council's arrangements for Whistleblowing.
18. We also co-ordinate the fraud reporting hotline on behalf of all local authorities within the county. The last 2 years have seen significant increases in the amount of disclosures reported to us – the overall amount of referrals made in 2015/16 rose by 115% on the previous year. We believe this is the result of increased and targeted media coverage instigated by ourselves and our partners within the Lincolnshire Counter Fraud Partnership. We also feel this provides



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