



AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
2 September 2013

WHISTLE BLOWING UPDATE

SUMMARY:

Audit and Governance Committee have requested an update on whistle blowing every six months. Since the last report, usage of the service continues to be fairly consistent, with a slight increase in the average number of calls at around 4 per month and 0.8 investigations compared to 3.3 calls and 0.8 investigations for the same period in 2011-12.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is invited to note the progress outlined in the report.

RECENT SERVICE ACTIVITY:

Usage Table –

Month	Total no. of calls	Total requiring investigation	Main Incidents Reported Directorate	Directorate
Jan 2013	7	2	Conflict of interests Bullying	CSF ASC
Feb	6	1	Breach of company policy	BS
March	4	0	None reported	
Apr	3	0	None reported	
May	4	1	Duty of care	ASC
June	4	1	Discrimination	ASC
TOTAL this period	28	5		

Summary of recent live cases and outcomes reported via the whistle blowing service:

Month	Nature of complaint	Outcome
Jan 2013	Allegations of financial irregularities and misuse of the SCC purchasing card	Audit were informed and an investigation took place. It was agreed for the service to carry out actions advised by Audit and the individual was contacted to gain further information.
Feb	Allegations of improper recruitment practices regarding a post not being advertised	Investigation revealed that the position in question was regraded under the job evaluation process. Advertisements are only applicable where a service is recruiting to a position. In this case the position was evaluated in December 2012 to accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of the post.
June	Allegations of discrimination when applying to study for a qualification	Investigation took place and feedback was given explaining why the individual didn't meet the criteria to apply for the training, other people have been told they are not eligible too. All those concerned were sent an email explaining why.

PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

A mix of corporate communications channels is being used to continue to inform and engage the audience groups. This includes:

- A regular anti-fraud campaign has been running on the intranet to encourage staff to report any incidences of fraud, paying false invoices, making fraudulent expense claims.
- A rolling programme of publicity to increase awareness of whistle blowing, as part of our People Strategy, linking to wellbeing
- Information on the s-net pages
- Details of the whistle blowing policy and Expolink's contact number is included in induction and STARS training
- Fairness Champions continue to help promote the scheme and communicate key messages
- The whistle blowing service has been integrated into the Employee Benefits offer as part of the Total Reward package, which receives a high number of viewings on s-net and therefore helps to promote this service
- Expolink is highlighted in the annual benefits survey.

Schools

The importance of encouraging whistle blowing in schools is a regular agenda item on meetings with Babcock 4S.

Publicity includes:

- Information on Expolink and how to report incidents has been placed in the SOS briefings to School Bursars/HR Officers
- An article on whistle blowing and promotion of Expolink has been published in a recent edition of the 'Surrey Governor' newsletter

- Having a whistle blowing policy in place and confirming that this has been communicated to staff is also a key part of the Schools Financial Value Standard and governors reassess the profile of the policy yearly
- Expolink promotional resources are provided on the Babcock 4S website, to encourage schools to promote the service
- As a result of the above, there has been a notable increase in requests for promotional posters, queries about where to download the whistle blowing policy, and about the policy itself.

FUTURE PLANNED PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- A question and answer article will be placed on 'Inside Surrey' giving further details of the service and how to access it, together with other interventions such as fairness champions
- Whistle blowing promotion will be a topic at a future series of Bursar briefings for schools, to ensure awareness and encourage promotion throughout Surrey County Council schools
- A further article will be included in the autumn term edition of the Surrey Governor newsletter
- Another article will be published in the SOS (School Office Support) bulletin to raise awareness among teachers new to Surrey
- A short survey is being planned, to check on employees' knowledge and understanding of the whistle blowing service, to help target future campaigns
- Information on Expolink is being placed on payslips every two months in 2013.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial :

There are no direct financial implications in this report.

Equalities :

The policies referred to in this report have been updated following consultation with the recognised trades unions and in accordance with the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Risk Management :

There are no direct risk management implications in this report.

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Background Papers: None

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