

Meeting of:	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 05 February 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Annual Whistleblowing Report
Purpose of Report:	To provide Governance and Audit Committee with an annual update and summary of results of a staff survey undertaken to ascertain awareness of and willingness to use the Council’s Whistleblowing Policy
Report Owner:	Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report that relate to an Individual Ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive Decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council adopted the Whistle Blowing Policy (the Policy) in 2014. The Policy was reviewed in 2019 and the revised Policy was endorsed by Audit Committee on the 3rd February 2020 • The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that employees of the Council are aware of their responsibility to the public and to protect individuals who may need to disclose information concerning any 'malpractice' within the Council, including any confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the workplace, be it of the employee or a fellow employee. • With 11 incidents reported, 2022/23 saw the highest annual number of whistleblowing incidents recorded (2021/22) and is significantly higher than the rolling 8-year average of 4.15 per annum. • Monitoring officers from 21 other Welsh Local Authorities were canvassed to ascertain the number of Whistleblowing incidents recorded to allow for comparison. Nine responses were received indicating a total of 36 incidents were recorded, an average of 4 incidents per Authority in 2022/23. However, 1 Authority accounted for 17 incidents, 2 recorded 5 incidents, 2 Authorities recorded 3 incidents, and 2 Authorities recorded 0 incidents. 	

- Of the 33 incidents reported over the past 8 years, Learning and Skills Directorate shows the lowest number at 3, Environment and Housing Directorate have the highest number of reported incidents at 13.
- During 2021/22 the Council saw an increase in corporate complaints from members of the public to 495 (2021/22: 358) and 51 under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.
- The Welsh Language Commissioner received 3 complaints from members of the public, 2 of which were upheld. Complaints referred from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales fell from 61 in 2021/22 to 49. These complaints are analysed in a separate Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2021/22.
- Critical to the success of the Policy is staff awareness and understanding together with a willingness to report issues.
- In June 2022 the Council launched the “Speak Out” Hub on Staffnet. The hub acts as a single point of access for staff to gain information about the Policy and includes an online form which allows staff to quickly and easily report issues. This is supported by a confidential Speak Out Line telephone service which provides a safe and confidential way for staff to report issues and concerns covered by the Policy.
- Following an internal promotional campaign during Quarter 2 in 2023, a staff survey was undertaken to assess staff awareness of the Policy during October and November 2023. A number of activities were undertaken to encourage participation by colleagues and increase responses; this included maintaining previous branding and content to ensure high levels of recognition by colleagues. In addition, promotional activities and opportunities to engage with the survey from the successful 2022 project were replicated. Use of survey functionality within the Councils Meta Compliance platform (normally used to promote Council policies) was explored, however this could not be used due to non-compliance with Welsh Language standards.
- A decision was made to use Participate Vale, the Council’s engagement platform, to host the “Speak Out” Survey rather than Microsoft Forms. Participate Vale has a sophisticated and easy to use survey building process, engagement tools, analytics and reporting functions.
- The survey broadly used the same questions as those used previously to allow comparison.
- A total of 288 staff responded to the 2023 survey from 21 Service Areas. This is a reduction on the number of respondents for 2021/22 of 232.
- The survey results indicate that promotional work undertaken to raise awareness of the policy is having a positive impact with the percentage of colleagues increasing from 75% to 92% stating that they have an increased awareness of the Policy.
- This should be tempered by the fact that only 49% of respondents have read the policy, although 54% stated that they had read the “Whistleblowing policy on a page” or watched the summary video.
- The percentage of respondents able to identify all 10 areas of malpractice covered by the Policy fell to 53.29% (2021/22: 68%), although a further 10.73% were able to identify 9 areas. Only 0.35% were not able to identify any areas. Although this seems incongruous with the fact that 92% were aware of the policy, it reflects the fact that under 50% of respondents have read it.

There is a need to improve colleague knowledge in this area of the policy through future promotional work.

- Encouraging the percentage of respondents who stated that they were willing to report issues, increased to 68% (2021/22 58%). Where staff are aware of the legal protections afforded to them, the percentage willing to report issues under the Policy rises to 72%.
- Where respondents gave reasons why they would not be willing to report whistleblowing incidents, a fear of potential consequences for themselves emerged as a clear theme.
- A full analysis of survey responses is provided in Appendix B.
- Fifteen Whistleblowing incidents have been reported since 1st April 2023. Ten are currently under investigation, 2 were outside of the Policy and were considered under other Council Policies such as the Grievance Policy, and 3 incidents were not upheld.
- As a result of the survey results, promotional work will be undertaken annually to promote awareness of the Policy and the legal protections afforded to Whistleblowers in an effort to increase staff willingness to report issues.
- Work is being undertaken to explore how Speak Out Survey response rates can be increased. This includes changes to branding and promotional activities, undertaking research with staff members to understand the factors that affect whether they would complete the survey and use this feedback to design a more effective campaign.
- Annual staff surveys will be undertaken to track progress in these areas, with results reported to Governance and Audit Committee.

Recommendations

1. That Governance and Audit Committee note the contents of the report.
2. That Governance and Audit Committee continue to receive Annual Reports in relation to policy implementation and incidents.
3. That Governance and Audit Committee continue to receive annual reports in relation to staff survey results.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. 2, &3 To ensure the effective monitoring of whistleblowing incidents and staff awareness of the Policy is undertaken.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council adopted the Whistleblowing Policy (the Policy) in 2014. The Policy was reviewed in 2019 and the revised Policy was adopted in 2020.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Policy is to ensure that employees of the Council are aware of their responsibility to the public and to protect individuals who may need to disclose information concerning any 'malpractice' within the Council, including any confidential information which relates to some danger, fraud or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the workplace, be it of the employee or a fellow employee.
- 1.3 The Policy and procedures apply to employees of the Vale of Glamorgan Council (excluding those employed at a schoolboy a School Governing Body), temporary employees, trainees, and independent contractors as well as those engaged through an agency.
- 1.4 The Policy confirms the standards expected from employees and sets out a framework within which staff can make a "protected disclosure" without fear that they will be subjected to victimisation or dismissal as long as the disclosure is made in the public interest in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the Act).
- 1.5 The Act identifies that staff can make a "protected disclosure" if in the reasonable belief of the member of staff making the disclosure intends to show one or more of illegal practices, a failure to comply with legal obligation, the health and safety of an individual (member of the public or staff) being endangered, damage to the environment, a miscarriage of justice and/or the deliberate concealment of these.
- 1.6 The Operational Manager for Customer Relations is responsible for the registration and maintaining a central record of all Whistleblowing concerns and to monitor progress and outcome of each investigation.

- 1.7** Directors are responsible for the receipt and population of the Whistleblowing central register and for the effective operation of the policy within their own Directorate. This includes ensuring that each employee is aware of the Policy and how to use it, managers are effectively trained in the use of the Policy and whistleblowing concerns are appropriately recorded and managed.
- 1.8** The Governance and Audit Committee acting through the Monitoring Officer has within its terms of reference overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Whistleblowing Policy with the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development having responsibility for updating the Policy as appropriate. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee in a confidential format.
- 1.9** Since June 2022 staff, managers and internal audit have been able to report Whistleblowing incidents on the Granicus-Firmstep GovService platform and this has become the central register for incidents. The platform records investigation progress and outcomes and access to records is strictly controlled by user access permissions.
- 1.10** The staff survey (Appendix B) has been undertaken to ascertain staff awareness of the Policy and the legal protections available to whistleblowers, together with staff willingness to report incidents and concerns.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Marketing and promotional activity has been undertaken since 2021/22 focussed on raising awareness of the policy, protections afforded to whistleblowers and the importance of using the policy to highlight areas of concern and malpractice as a way of improving services to residents.
- 2.2** A comprehensive promotional activities campaign was undertaken during October 2023 which included publicising the Policy on Staffnet, placing posters on staff noticeboards and email bulletins, in addition to internal departmental arrangements and promotion at staff meetings.
- 2.3** During 2022 the range of opportunities available to staff were increased to include an online form available on Staffnet, a confidential Speak Out telephone service provided by Customer Relations and a new Speak Out email address monitored by Internal Audit. These options were implemented to complement the reporting routes which were already in existence and to remove barriers to colleagues reporting of issues while maintaining confidentiality.
- 2.4** During 2022/23 11 reports were made through the Whistleblowing Policy, 5 relating to Social Services, 4 to Environment and Housing and 1 each for Corporate Resources and Place. No reports were received in relation to Learning & Skills.
- 2.5** The average number of reports made stands at 4.15 per annum over the past 8 years with 2022/23 seeing the highest number reports (Appendix A).
- 2.6** Monitoring Officers from 9 Welsh Authorities shared Whistleblowing data for 2022/23. Vale of Glamorgan Council recorded the second highest number of

incidents, with one Council recording 17. Two Councils reported no incidents as having been recorded.

- 2.7** Of the 34 incidents reported over the past 8 years, 17 were not upheld, 5 were partially upheld and 2 have been upheld. Others were deemed to be outside of policy or are currently under investigation.
- 2.8** A total of 12 incidents related to Illegal Practices (including Fraud or misuse of Council assets and equipment), 10 related to failure to Meet Legal Obligations (including mishandling of funds, and employment disputes), Five to Health and Safety concerns. No incidents related to damage to the Environment or Miscarriage of Justice. Six reports were deemed to fall outside of the policy.
- 2.9** It should be noted that previously issues reported using the Policy, but which were deemed to fall outside of Policy have not been formally recorded or reported but instead redirected and dealt with under the appropriate Policy.
- 2.10** In October 2023 a comprehensive promotional campaign was undertaken to raise staff awareness of the Policy and the reporting options available to staff. In addition, 'a Policy on a Page' paper was prepared and shared with Heads of Services for disseminating within Team Meetings, the same was also shared with Departmental Management Team Meetings and discussions have taken place at Senior Leadership Team level.
- 2.11** The Council recognises the importance of being able to learn from Whistleblowing investigations to improve the specific situation and where applicable to apply this learning more widely to reduce the risk of similar issues arising. Actions arising from investigations have been included to revise and strengthen processes and procedures, improving communication with staff, undertaking staff training and instigation of disciplinary procedures (1 instance).
- 2.12** A staff survey was undertaken between during October and November 2023 to assess the effectiveness of the promotional activity, highlight common themes and identify opportunities to improve awareness, access and willingness to report issues. In order to maximise the response rate staff were given the opportunity to respond to the survey online or using a paper survey.
- 2.13** A full analysis of survey responses is provided in Appendix B.
- 2.14** A total of 288 staff members responded to the survey from 21 different services. The highest number of responses was received from Environment & Housing, amounting to 33% of the total with Learning & Skills amounting to 27%. Responses from Social Services directorate accounted for 21% of respondents, with Resources directorate totalling 16%.
- 2.15** Future promotional activity will be targeted in those services with low response rates to ensure that data supplied provides as complete a picture as possible of attitudes of staff from across the council.
- 2.16** The need to promote a wider awareness of the Policy emerged as a key theme from survey results. The percentage of respondents who stated that they had heard of the Policy increased from 75% in 2022 to 92% in 2023. In addition, the

number of respondents who said that they had read the Policy improved from 41% to 49%.

- 2.17** Encouragingly, a high proportion of respondents were able to identify most of the policy areas covered by the Policy with 68% identifying at least 9 areas; 87% recognised “A breach of our Code of Conduct for Staff or Councillors” as an area covered; while 85% recognised “Suspected fraud or Corruption”, “Sexual, physical, or verbal abuse of our clients” and “Conduct which is a criminal offence or breach of law” respectively.
- 2.18** “Damage to the environment” continued to be the least recognised area with only 71% (76%) of respondents recognising this as an area covered by the Policy. This is an area for future promotional focus.
- 2.19** Willingness of staff to report issues under the Policy is critical to achieving its objectives. Encouragingly the number of respondents indicating that they would be willing to whistleblow, increased to 68% compared to 58% in 2022.
- 2.20** A key reason given by staff who were unwilling to report issues was a concern that there would be negative consequences for them. One respondent stated that “At present I do not feel that I would get the support and protection from the council”, while another stating that they had a “fear of losing their job”.
- 2.21** Where staff are aware of the legal protections afforded to whistleblowers, willingness to report issues increased significantly to 72%. Respondents reporting that they were aware of protections increased from 48% in 2022 to 74%.
- 2.22** Reporting to a line manager is the most popular choice with 67% (in comparison to 65% previously) of respondents. The number of respondents indicating that they would use the online form increased from 30% to 37%, followed by Head of Service at 35%. 29% stated that they would use the Speak out email address, and 21% stated that they would use the Speak Out telephone line. Respondents were given the option of choosing more than one response for this question.
- 2.23** When respondents were asked to provide ideas about how the Council could improve awareness of the Policy, attendance at team meetings and briefing sessions was a popular option. Hosting workshops for staff and creation of a training video were also popular suggestions.
- 2.24** The key themes identified by the staff survey will be addressed during the next annual promotional campaign, with impact tracked through annual staff surveys.
- 2.25** In addition, a Panel review was undertaken by three Independent/Co-opted Members of the Standards Committee flowing from an historical case, and as part of that review Standards Committee will be considering as a Part II item at its meeting on the 2nd of February 2024 a series of recommendations. A verbal update will be provided at Governance and Audit Committee in this regard.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Policy provides opportunity for staff to highlight concerns regarding the way the council works, ensuring resources are used sustainably and in a way the best benefits residents.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** The Policy provides opportunity for staff to highlight concerns regarding the way in which council activities impact on the local environment.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The Policy helps ensure that Council funds and resources are used appropriately.

Employment

- 5.2** There is a resource impact in relation to the investigation and resolution of concerns raised under the Policy. The impact is borne by directorates and Internal Audit.

Legal (Including Equalities)

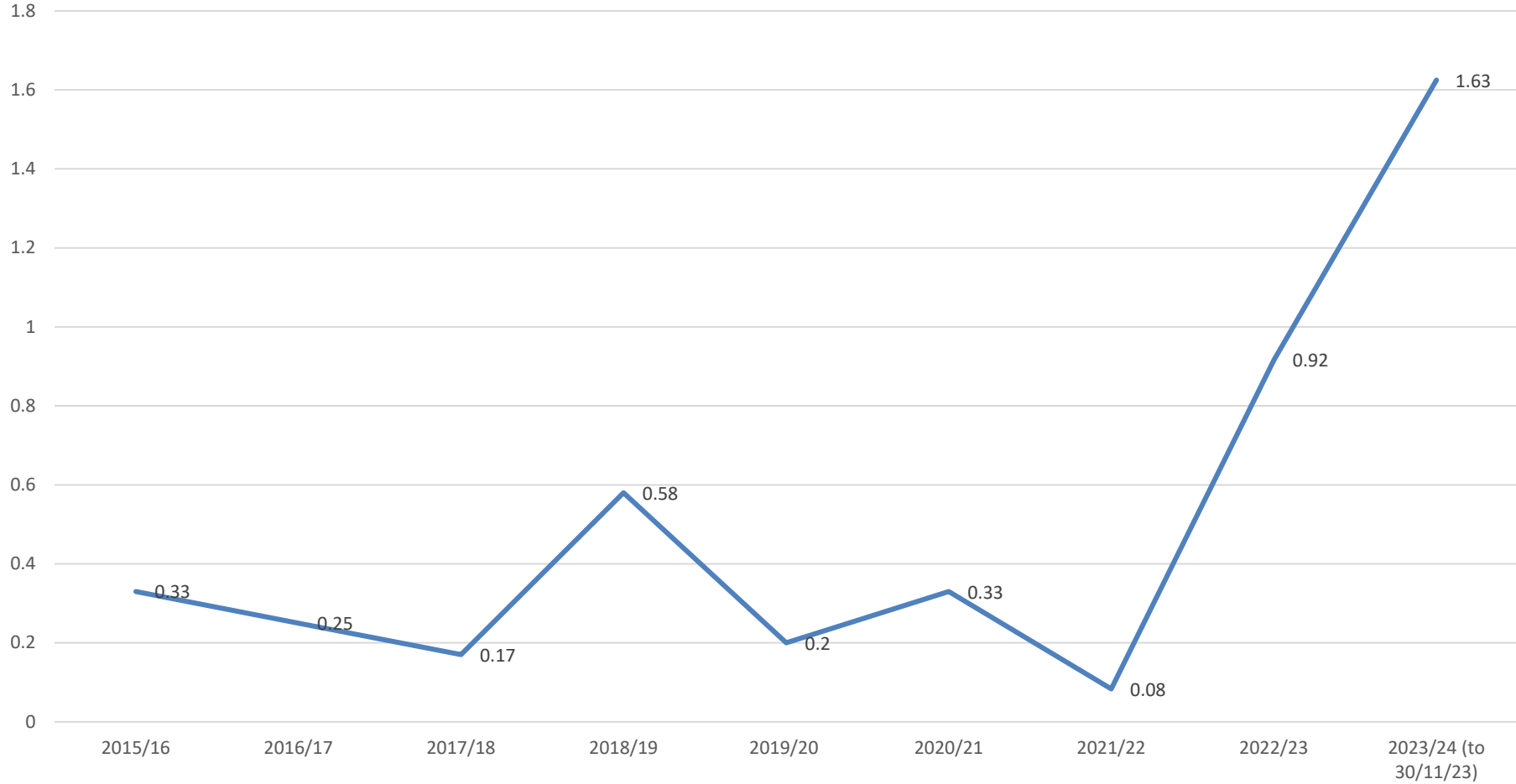
- 5.3** The Policy helps ensure that crime committed by Council employees in undertaking their duties can be detected and addressed.

6. Background Papers

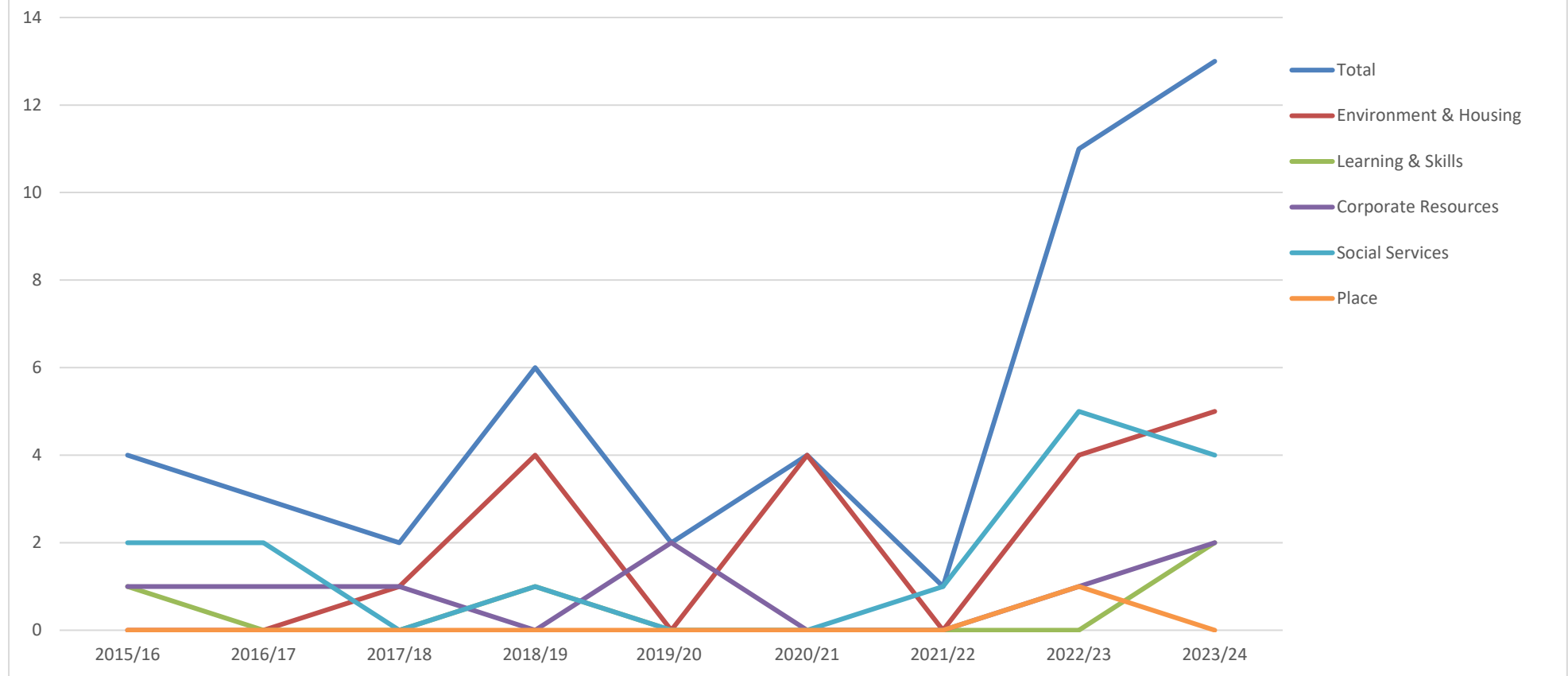
Whistle Blowing Report Summary 2023/24 to 30/11/23**Appendix A**

Reporting Period	Total	Environment & Housing	Learning & Skills	Corporate Resources	Social Services	Place
2015/16	4	0	1	1	2	0
2016/17	3	0	0	1	2	0
2017/18	2	1	0	1	0	0
2018/19	7	4	2	0	1	0
2019/20	2	0	0	2	0	0
2020/21	4	4	0	0	0	0
2021/22	1	0	0	0	1	0
2022/23	11	4	0	1	5	1
2023/24 (to 30/11/23)	13	5	2	2	4	0

Average Whistle Blowing Reports Per Month by Financial Year



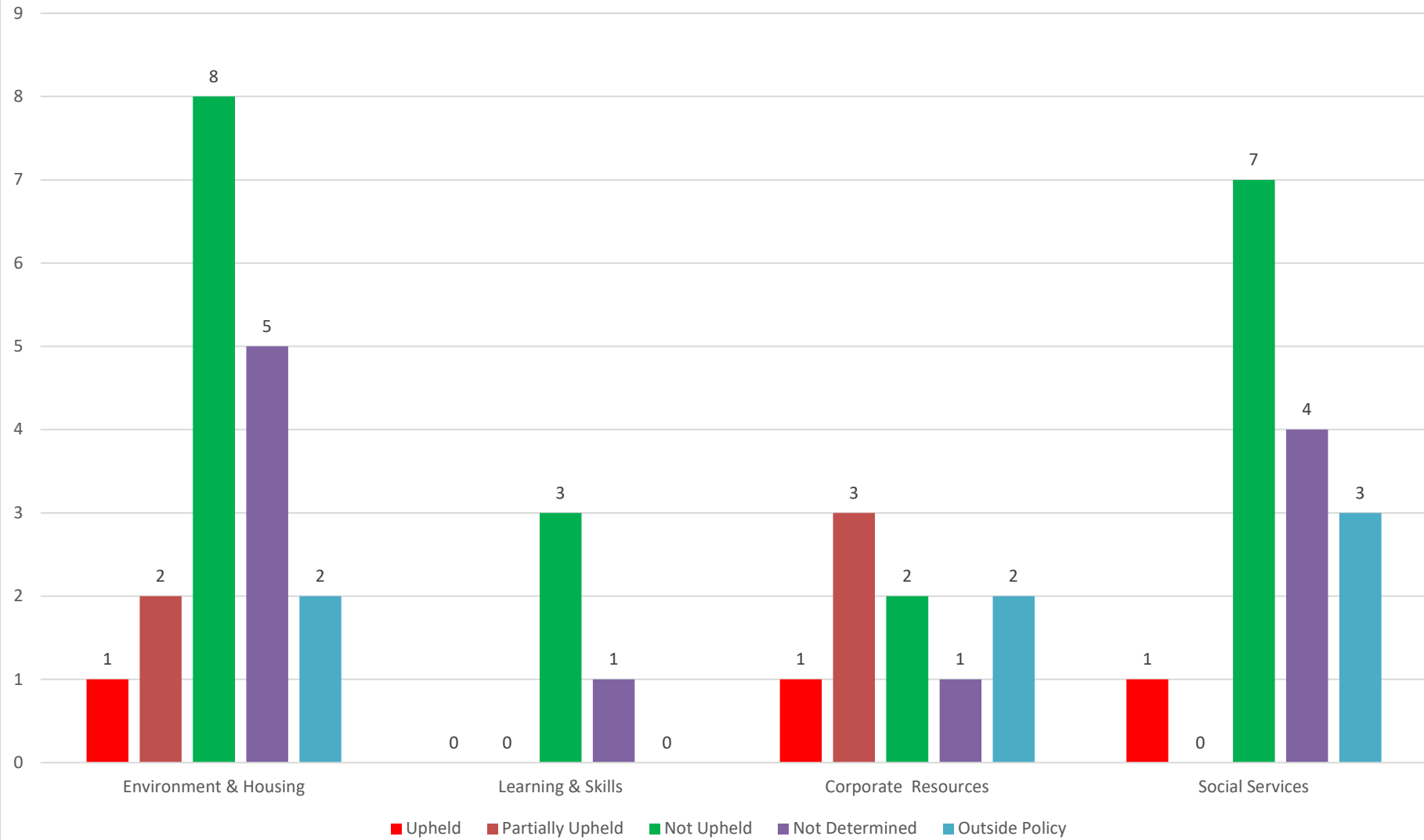
Whistle Blowing Incidents by Directorate to 30 Nov 2023



**Incidents incorrectly notified via the policy not reported prior to 2021/22*

***Place not created as a Directorate prior to 2022/23. Records before this included in Corporate Resources*

Outcome by Directorate (to 30/11/23)



CONCERNS BY CATEGORY

	Illegal Practices	Failure of Legal Obligations	Health & Safety	Damage to Environment	Miscarriage of Justice	Outside Policy
2015/16	1	1	1	0	0	0
2016/17	2	0	1	0	0	0
2017/18	0	1	1	0	0	0
2018/19	6	1	0	0	0	0
2019/20	1	1	0	0	0	0
2020/21	1	2	1	0	0	0
2021/22	0	0	0	0	0	1
2022/23	1	4	1	0	0	5
2023/24 (to 30/11/23)	4	8	0	0	0	1

*1 report made in 2021/22 and 5 reports in 2022/23 related to issues that do not fall within the policy.

Speak Out Survey 2023

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

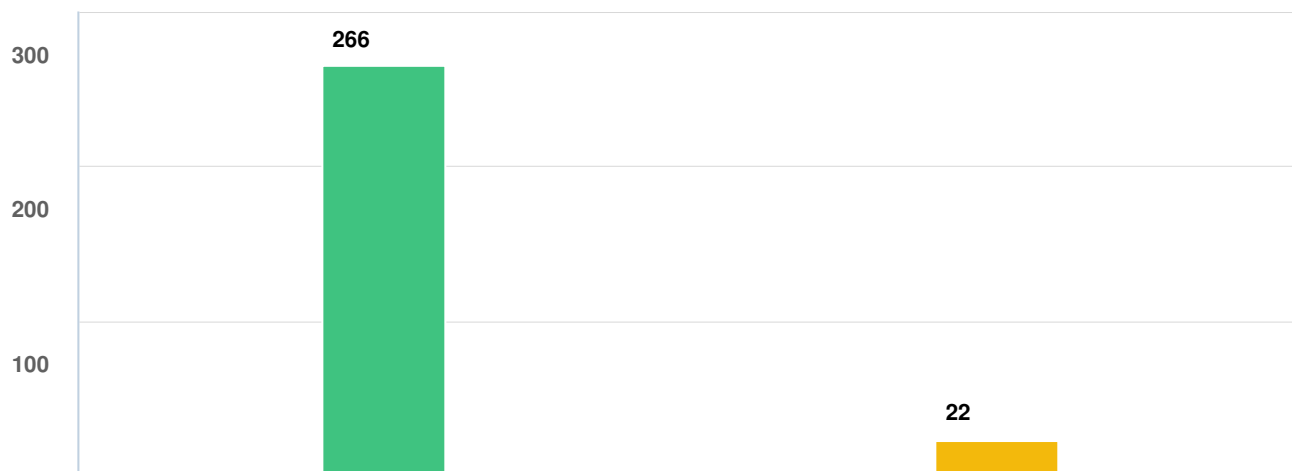
01 October 2023 - 24 November 2023

PROJECT NAME:
Speak Out Survey



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 Have you heard of the Council’s whistleblowing policy?

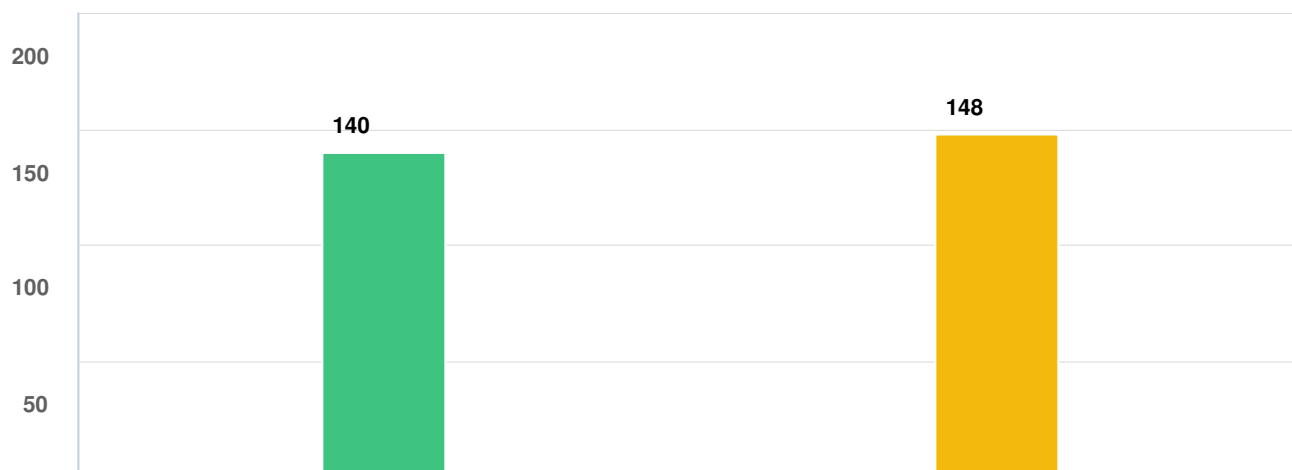


Question options

- Yes
- No

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q2 Have you read the Council’s whistleblowing policy?

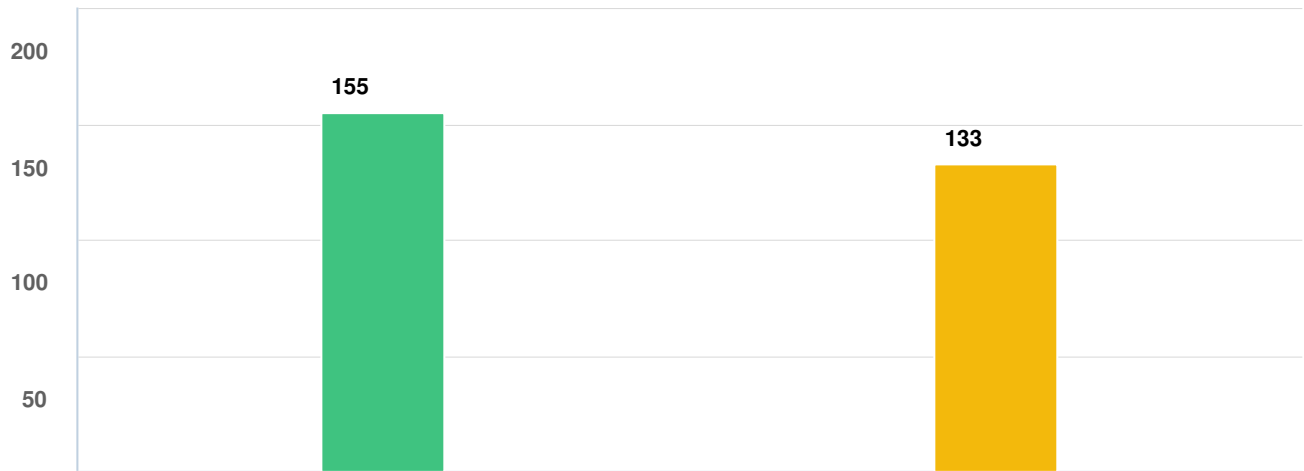


Question options

- Yes
- No

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q3 | Have you read the Council’s whistleblowing ‘policy on a page’ and/or watched the summary video?

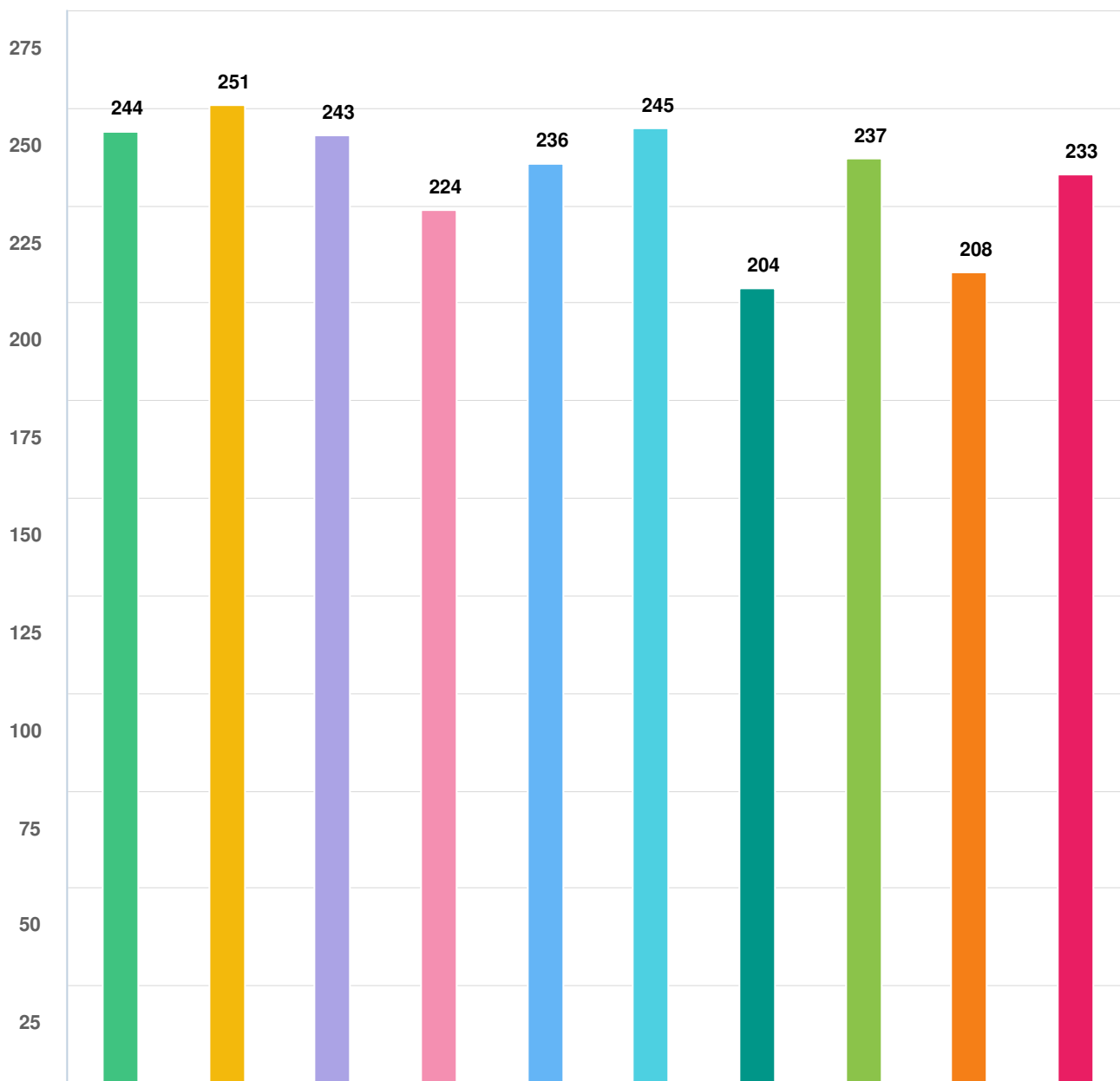


Question options

- Yes
- No

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q4 What areas are covered in the Council’s whistleblowing policy?

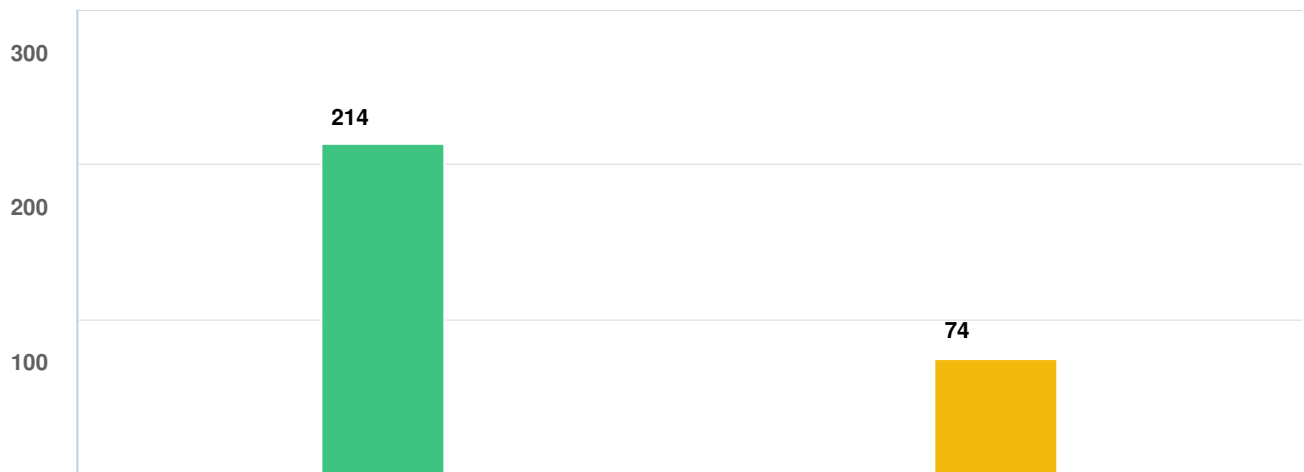


Question options

- Conduct which is a criminal offence or breach of law
- A breach of our Code of Conduct for staff or Councillors
- Sexual, physical, or verbal abuse of our clients, employees, contractors or public
- Dangerous procedures risking the health & safety of our clients, employees, contractors or public
- Unauthorised use of public funds
- Suspected fraud or corruption
- Damage to the environment (e.g. land, buildings, highways, water, air, waste, energy, transport, natural habitat etc.)
- Unethical or improper conduct
- Services that fall seriously below approved standards or practice
- Failure to follow the Council's policies and procedures

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
 Question type: Checkbox Question

Q5 Are you aware of the protection available for Whistleblowers?



Question options

- Yes
- No

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q6 | If you are not aware of the protection available for whistleblowers, please suggest how the Council could better communicate this

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:16 PM
Through ensuring that all staff have received, read and signed the policy

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:16 PM
Maybe a short video to briefly explain what it entails

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:23 PM
No idea what it is - promote more via email??

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:24 PM
I don't trust our employers

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:45 PM
Send emails advising of what protection there is for whistleblowers.

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:45 PM
there should be a face to face training course for all employees of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:48 PM
a compulsory idev module

Anonymous
10/23/2023 04:16 PM
E-learning course

Anonymous
10/23/2023 05:48 PM
via email or on staffnet

Anonymous
10/23/2023 10:14 PM
Maybe through inset training

Anonymous
10/24/2023 09:16 AM
I'm aware that the information is available but haven't had time to read it yet.

Anonymous
10/24/2023 04:23 PM
idev training

Anonymous 10/24/2023 05:19 PM	No feedback - it has been made available I don't feel the need follow up
Anonymous 10/24/2023 08:25 PM	Make it a policy that all must be trained on
Anonymous 10/24/2023 10:01 PM	Email
Anonymous 10/24/2023 10:03 PM	Via text or staff meeting
Anonymous 10/25/2023 09:30 AM	allow anonymous reporting
Anonymous 10/25/2023 11:35 AM	Promotion such as the video highlighting the policy
Anonymous 10/25/2023 03:42 PM	Attend Team Meetings? Hold informal sessions within each work building?
Anonymous 11/03/2023 10:04 AM	Email the policy to all staff
Anonymous 11/03/2023 10:30 AM	Poster
Anonymous 11/06/2023 08:27 AM	I have not read the policy myself (not that I can recall anyway). but I suspect the policy contains the necessary protection so difficult to comment. What definitely should occur is the continuous promotion of the whistleblowing policy, advertising and publishing cases when staff are 'dealt with' accordingly which helps to show other staff that cases are being dealt with appropriately which should encourage others to come forward to report matters. THE most important thing in my view is for council staff to see action being taken or read about the results when whistleblowing has occurred and is found to be substantiated.
Anonymous 11/13/2023 01:24 PM	Circulate it by email
Anonymous	Tell us briefly on inset days

11/13/2023 02:58 PM

Anonymous

Emails/supervision sessions

11/14/2023 01:29 PM

Anonymous

I was a whistle blower and lost my Council job as a result.

11/14/2023 11:23 PM

Anonymous

Have audit investigated rather than brush things under the carpet like they have done rather than put the council in a bad picture.

11/15/2023 10:07 AM

Anonymous

Short bulleted list of protection available - there's too many long policies about that it's impossible to retain all the info.

11/15/2023 10:08 AM

Anonymous

Session with teams.

11/15/2023 10:41 AM

Anonymous

Make management tell staff

11/16/2023 06:41 PM

Anonymous

They can do more workshop to help people understand the whistleblower

11/21/2023 03:04 PM

Anonymous

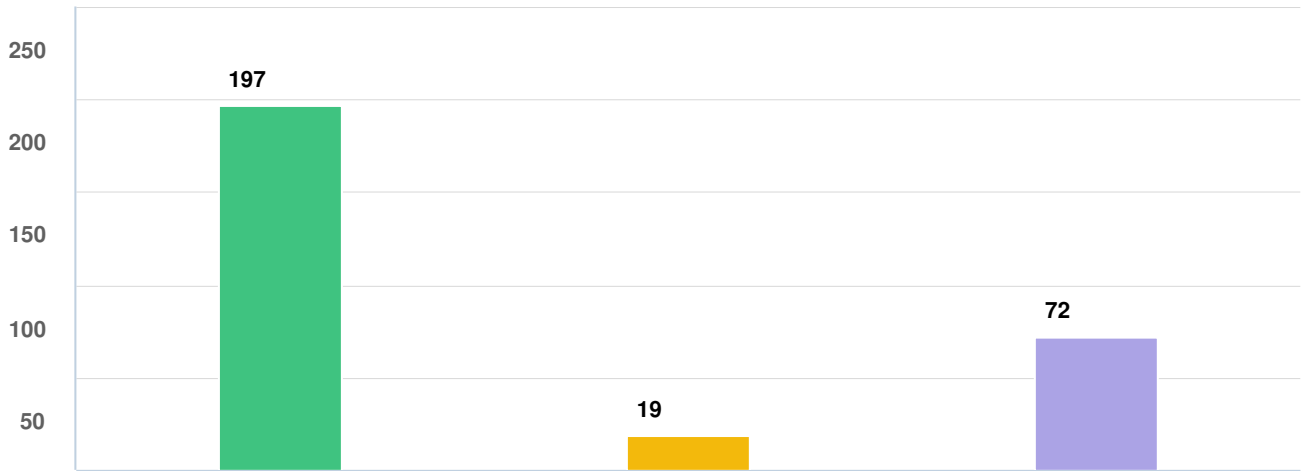
The short animation was useful so this could be extended to cover more elements of the policy.

11/22/2023 09:44 AM

Optional question (32 response(s), 256 skipped)

Question type: Essay Question

Q7 Would you whistleblow?



Question options

● Yes ● No ● I don't know

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q8 If you answered 'no' or 'I don't know', please explain why.

Anonymous

10/20/2023 12:48 PM

I would have to know the full ramifications of what would happen if I whistleblowed and read up properly on the protection I would receive.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:19 PM

previous experience

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:32 PM

I have worked for the Council for a long time and had a problem with my line manager and went above her head to my old manager. My old manager said 'if you had gone above me when I was was manager, I would not have been very happy'. That was it, no why, what, etc. In the end I typed up some bullet points and met with my supervisor and he asked if he could keep the bullet points, so he could remember them. He then behind my back, submitted them to HR. HR phoned me and said this would stay on my record, so I asked them to withdraw them immediately. I felt very unsupported and has put me off saying anything going forward. I've totally lost the trust of my employer helping me when I needed it. The manager has since left and I still happily in my job, which I am more than capable off.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:37 PM

Fear

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:44 PM

not sure how I would feel

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:45 PM

At present I do not feel that I would get the support and protection from the council that would be required. There is an underlying hierarchy that exists and that is dangerous for any organisation.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:47 PM

I don't feel safe or secure enough in my role to whistleblow

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:48 PM

fear of losing my job

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:05 PM

Culture does not encourage it. Complaints are assumed to be vexatious, rather than supported. Grievances are not progressed and are routinely ignored.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:06 PM

Depends on the circumstances

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:09 PM

I have seen colleague whistle blow and they were not supported at all by the managers, HR or the council. Causing them to leave the council.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:11 PM

Unable to answer as it would depend upon the circumstances at the time.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:28 PM

Had a false allegation made against be in a previous job for whistle blowing breaches in health and safety and neglect.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:32 PM

I would worry what protection would actually be put in place within the council.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:41 PM

The process wasn't followed correctly at our school - the whistleblower was protected yet he broke the policy's 'rules' by telling everyone what he was accusing someone of, yet the accused victim was not protected at all and the whistleblower was not held

accountable for his break of rules.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 05:36 PM

Depends on the situation

Anonymous

10/23/2023 05:48 PM

having never been in the situation i cant answer for sure, if it was serious enough Im sure i would

Anonymous

10/23/2023 06:34 PM

I don't know if I would need to whistleblow to be honest if I saw something wrong I would say there and then and then take it to whoever needed to know higher up.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 11:57 PM

Dangerous

Anonymous

10/24/2023 03:27 AM

I would have to be 100 per cent sure. I wouldn't want to make a mistake and ruin someone's career.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 06:17 AM

Wouldn't whistle-blow because of fear of implications of working for the vale and not being trusted.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 07:58 AM

Small team obvious who whistle blew

Anonymous

10/24/2023 08:08 AM

It would depend on if it was evident it was me that did the whistle blowing.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 08:37 AM

Even though there is protection in place, I would still be afraid of repercussions

Anonymous

10/24/2023 09:09 AM

would not know who to whistleblow too, as i really don't trust my manager or managers to keep it confidential and i feel there would be repercussions

Anonymous

10/24/2023 09:29 AM

I would need advice first whether it would be classed as a whistleblowing matter.

Anonymous

I'm not comfortable or confident enough. Those without sin cast the

10/24/2023 09:39 AM

first stone!!!!!!!!!!!!

Anonymous

10/24/2023 09:45 AM

would speak to my line manager first - unless this is the person i was reporting.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 01:15 PM

I think it depends on the reason, if i felt threatened in any way or if i did not feel confident that i would be supported in the right way. Also for fear of being outcast by others. If its a member of my team or managers, it makes things awkward in the working environment. That's a lot of time working together in a team every day if feeling unhappy and unsupported. However if there is a safety consequence of a colleague or member of public, by not speaking out, i think i would have to and worry about the outcome later.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 02:46 PM

Lack of confidence in being supported.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:18 PM

It would not be an easy thing to do

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:23 PM

dependent on circumstances/repercussions

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:42 PM

Because it should not be tolerated.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 05:19 PM

depends on the circumstances

Anonymous

10/24/2023 07:43 PM

I still don't believe there is a culture in the organisation that fairly and impartially reviews complaints or that there is sufficient protection for staff that use the whistleblowing policy from potential repercussions, especially from senior leaders within the pockets of the organisation. This is clearly evident from patterns of inappropriate behaviour that are obvious in some directorates that isn't challenged or dealt with, but instead more junior members of staff are treated as "sacrificial lambs" and either chose to leave or are forced to leave.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 10:01 PM

Not knowing what would happen in the future

Anonymous

10/25/2023 08:47 AM

It would depend on the severity of the situation,

Anonymous

10/25/2023 09:24 AM

I would worried about repercussions from my direct superiors.

Anonymous

10/25/2023 09:30 AM

Fear of the employee finding out who you were

Anonymous

10/25/2023 03:42 PM

I know someone who did, and their name was shared across the organisation - which resulted in her being harassed by colleagues and bullied. She had to leave the job in the end. Her mental health suffered.

Anonymous

10/27/2023 12:13 PM

Dependant on situation / Personal comfort

Anonymous

10/27/2023 02:13 PM

the investigation process is flawed, the person accused does not get to see the allegation and is investigated as if they have been found guilty before the process starts. There are no updates on the process to the accused. There needs to be a two way approach.

Anonymous

10/30/2023 11:30 AM

It would depend on the situation and if an issue can be resolved face to face, through management or through restorative practice.

Anonymous

11/03/2023 10:11 AM

Depends on circumstances

Anonymous

11/03/2023 10:20 AM

Depending on the seriousness of the alleged offence.

Anonymous

11/03/2023 10:22 AM

Depends on what is was or if it could be dealt with without going further

Anonymous

11/03/2023 11:40 AM

Cause I have not read it

Anonymous

11/03/2023 12:28 PM

From those I have seen whistleblowing in the past- the blower has ALWAYS been forced out of their job and the issue not dealt with.

Anonymous

11/03/2023 12:46 PM

It would reflect badly on my school and there could be repercussions from leadership that would be detrimental to my daily life at work.

Anonymous

11/03/2023 09:25 PM

I just wouldn't

Anonymous

11/06/2023 10:38 AM

I have not encountered anything that I would consider worth whistleblowing about. I would have to seriously consider the fallout effect of whistleblowing.

Anonymous

11/06/2023 06:36 PM

I would be concerned it might affect my employment or future employability, despite the message that whistleblowers are protected.

Anonymous

11/13/2023 12:46 PM

not read it so not sure what it entails

Anonymous

11/13/2023 01:13 PM

Whilst I have understanding of the protection in place for whistleblowers, I'm not sure how comfortable I would feel coming forward with information unless it was something dangerous.

Anonymous

11/13/2023 01:19 PM

Never been in a circumstance where I would need to whistleblow. But if the need be then yes I probably would.

Anonymous

11/13/2023 01:21 PM

I'm not sure what it is.

Anonymous

11/13/2023 01:22 PM

Previous experience. I left my last employer after 23 years following my telling everything I knew about the fraud and corruption that was being perpetrated by my managers during an audit. They kept their jobs and I left. One has since retired and the other is still in post. I didn't whistle blow before that as I was not convinced that any protection in place would really keep me safe, especially if I stayed in the organisation. Following my departure, and her retirement, one of my managers contacted me by letter which was very unpleasant. This is a complicated issue and any 'Yes' answers that you receive to question 6 are probably from people who have been lucky enough never to have had to consider it.

Anonymous

11/13/2023 02:03 PM

Feel more comfortable bringing a matter to the attention of line manager.

Anonymous

11/14/2023 08:37 AM

As i am not certain i would be protected against repercussions

Anonymous

11/14/2023 08:54 AM

I know a policy is in place but would still feel anxious about making it official

Anonymous

11/14/2023 10:52 AM

I would be concerned about the repercussions from other members of staff

Anonymous

11/15/2023 10:08 AM

It would depend on the severity of the situation. If it was something small I'd try and resolve it using Line Management system first. I'd also need to check the whistle-blowing policy again to ensure the details (that my issue came under it and that I was protected) as it's many years since I read it.

Anonymous

11/15/2023 10:41 AM

Previous colleague was bullied, when her name was told to all in service. Awful non-confidential experience for her!

Anonymous

11/15/2023 11:38 AM

it would depend on offence, the policy does not guarantee anonymity.

Anonymous

11/15/2023 01:52 PM

Depends on the nature/severity of the issue

Anonymous

11/16/2023 06:41 PM

I think my manager would hold it against me

Anonymous

11/17/2023 04:18 PM

The department I work

Anonymous

11/20/2023 10:37 AM

n/a

Anonymous

11/21/2023 03:38 PM

Depends on the situation

Anonymous

11/22/2023 09:44 AM

Concerns over anonymity, would there be repercussions both personally and professionally

Anonymous

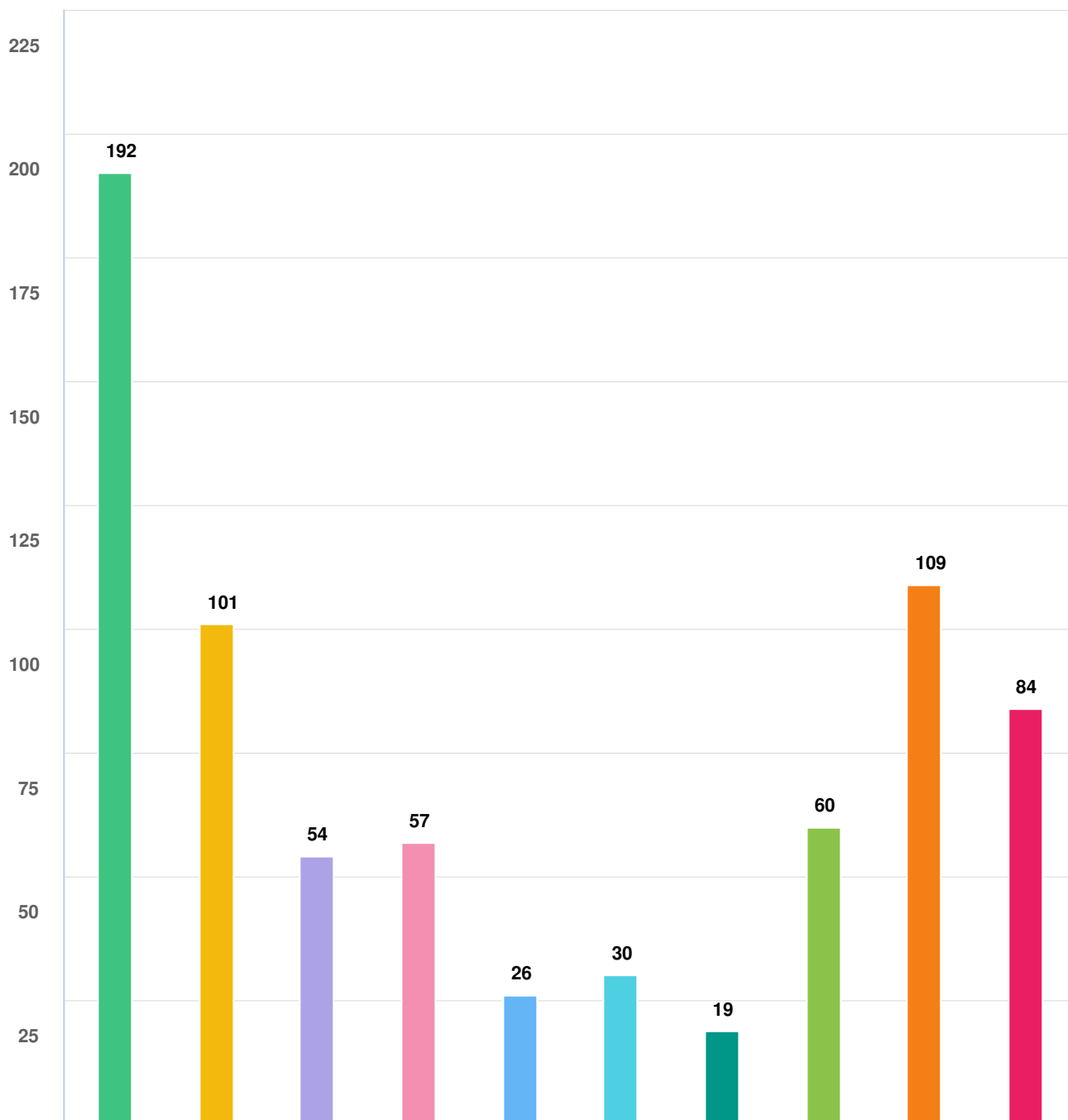
no

11/23/2023 07:59 AM

Optional question (71 response(s), 217 skipped)

Question type: Essay Question

Q9 Who would you feel most comfortable to report your concerns to?

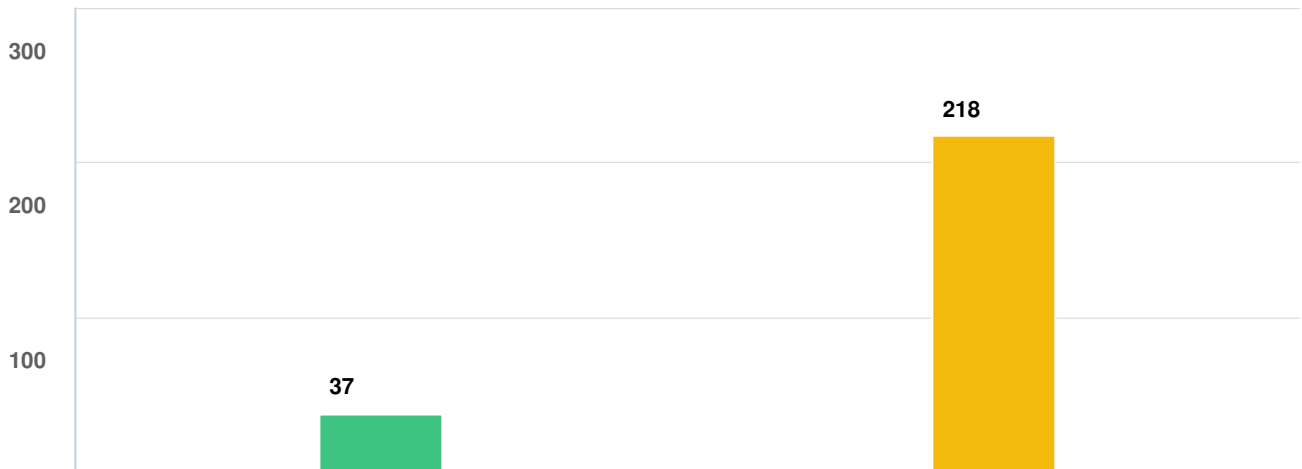


Question options

- Line manager ● Head of service or department ● Chief Executive / Director / Monitoring Officer
- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development ● Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer
- Head of Regional Internal Audit Service ● Chair of Governors (Schools only) ● Speak Out Line through Contact OneVale
- Speak Out Line online form on Staffnet ● Speak Out Line email

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
 Question type: Checkbox Question

Q10 | If you have not read the policy, do you feel that you require more information on whistleblowing in another format?



Question options

- Yes
- No

Optional question (255 response(s), 33 skipped)
Question type: Checkbox Question

Q11 | Please suggest what would help you to better understand whistleblowing?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 02:52 PM | Reading the policy as and when required |
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:16 PM | Receiving the whistle blowing policy through email Regular updates if there are any |
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:16 PM | Brief overview |
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:19 PM | n/a |
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:23 PM | Webinar |
| Anonymous
10/23/2023 03:24 PM | people have previously whistleblown in our department and nothing was done |

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:25 PM

I understand it

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:32 PM

Re: Question 4 - I can't answer this question as I haven't read the policy. It is a required field so I have submitted a 'best guess' answer here. Re: Question 7 - it depends what my concern was. I would report to the most appropriate person at that time. Re: Q9 - Examples of whistle blowing, esp. ones which include any repercussions, positive or negative, on the whistle blower. Example external resources and articles on whistle blowing and the legal protection.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:32 PM

I don't know, because I was so upset by what happened.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:40 PM

I understand the basis of what the policy is

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:45 PM

Face to face training course for all VOG Employees with an option during the course to discuss any potential issues in a private setting.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:54 PM

fully understand the policy

Anonymous

10/23/2023 03:55 PM

N/A

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:03 PM

A step-by step illustrated example of following the Speak Out policy in action

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:05 PM

-

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:06 PM

I could read the policy

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:09 PM

N/A

Anonymous

How staff will be protected if they raise a concern. Also if a complaint

10/23/2023 04:09 PM

is upheld for bullying int the council it is the bully who is put on redeployment and not the victim.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:10 PM

I think there's a stigma around whistleblowing in general as it can potentially be quite confrontational. open conversations within the workplace (in supervisions, team meetings and informal supervisor conversations) could reduce or manage the anxiety people feel around whistleblowing.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:16 PM

I think should the need arise a confidential helpline may be of use, to discuss your concerns initially to ensure there is a breach of policy

Anonymous

10/23/2023 04:41 PM

The process wasn't followed correctly at our school - the whistleblower was protected yet he broke the policy's 'rules' by telling everyone what he was accusing someone of, yet the accused victim was not protected at all and the whistleblower was not held accountable for his break of rules. It would be useful to inform perople of how this process can be made fairer.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 06:34 PM

I didn't know it was a policy I needed to read as I've never been quiet about speaking my mind.

Anonymous

10/23/2023 11:57 PM

Face to face explanation.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 08:52 AM

Bitesize/bullet pints to click on for further information rather than having to search through a whole policy doc

Anonymous

10/24/2023 09:09 AM

i think you have to have confidence in who you are reporting it too

Anonymous

10/24/2023 09:34 AM

regular did you know emails with bite size pieces of information

Anonymous

10/24/2023 11:16 AM

Whole staff training through inset.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 01:15 PM

I am not sure where to find this information and i have not been encouraged to read it by my line manager

Anonymous

10/24/2023 03:18 PM

At this moment in time I am unable to pinpoint anything really.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:18 PM

Distribute the policy to school staff and give us time to read it - this is the first I have heard of it

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:42 PM

n/a

Anonymous

10/24/2023 04:45 PM

some real-life anonymised examples with outcomes

Anonymous

10/24/2023 05:09 PM

Specific examples of whistleblowing.

Anonymous

10/24/2023 05:10 PM

Practice examples of policy being used

Anonymous

10/24/2023 05:19 PM

no comment

Anonymous

10/24/2023 10:03 PM

Information leaflet

Anonymous

10/25/2023 08:26 AM

Training online in regard to this policy would be helpful if not yet available.

Anonymous

10/25/2023 09:30 AM

I understand what whistleblowing is, but feel anxious about reporting anything out of fear of repercussions or staff finding out who I am

Anonymous

10/25/2023 11:35 AM

The short video was very helpful

Anonymous

10/25/2023 03:42 PM

Attend Team Meetings? Hold informal sessions within each work building?

Anonymous

10/26/2023 09:52 AM

The Policy is long to read, and although I understand it needs to contain relevant information etc, it could be shorter.

Anonymous 10/26/2023 03:14 PM	I have read some of the policy for a course that I am undertaking, but could do with a quick check list as it is challenging to have full knowledge of many different policies and procedures.
Anonymous 10/26/2023 07:19 PM	Training event on it
Anonymous 10/27/2023 12:13 PM	A drop in session with Q&A
Anonymous 10/27/2023 02:13 PM	N/A
Anonymous 11/03/2023 10:04 AM	Reading the policy
Anonymous 11/03/2023 10:11 AM	Understand reason behind
Anonymous 11/03/2023 10:30 AM	Bullet points
Anonymous 11/03/2023 12:28 PM	Cases where whistleblowing has achieved a proper investigation.
Anonymous 11/03/2023 12:46 PM	Time during the working day to read/watch the policy.
Anonymous 11/04/2023 02:43 PM	An email
Anonymous 11/06/2023 07:59 AM	Possibly at a team meeting that someone speaks on the topic. Generally all or most attend. Operational Manager would be a good speaker on this topic to staff.
Anonymous 11/06/2023 08:27 AM	Nothing that I can think of.
Anonymous 11/06/2023 10:38 AM	I understand it.

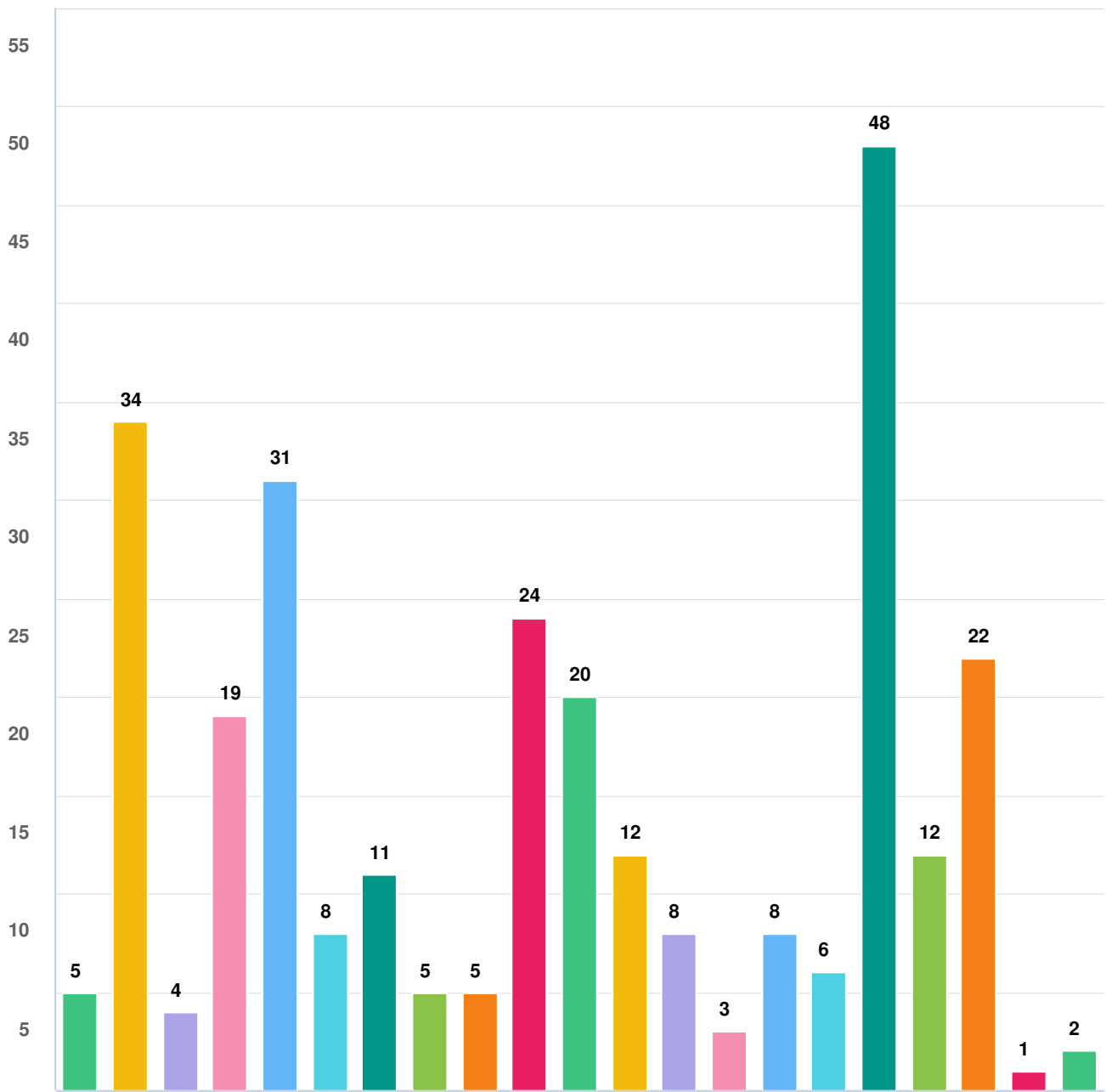
Anonymous 11/06/2023 06:36 PM	Hearing some case studies.
Anonymous 11/09/2023 11:39 AM	Nothing. I understand it well
Anonymous 11/13/2023 12:53 PM	I would like to see the type of queries raised and info on hw actioned
Anonymous 11/13/2023 01:21 PM	A video or email with info,
Anonymous 11/13/2023 01:22 PM	I fully understand whistle blowing.
Anonymous 11/13/2023 01:39 PM	Fully understand
Anonymous 11/13/2023 01:46 PM	Regular up to date info on whistleblowing
Anonymous 11/13/2023 02:03 PM	Possible regular prompts/reminders to ensure it's read and understood.
Anonymous 11/13/2023 02:58 PM	Don't know
Anonymous 11/13/2023 04:58 PM	Nothing
Anonymous 11/14/2023 02:07 AM	Speaking out, The boldness and courageous act of speaking out.
Anonymous 11/14/2023 09:58 AM	Nothing I understand it
Anonymous 11/14/2023 10:52 AM	A talk from a professional within the school
Anonymous 11/14/2023 01:29 PM	online training

Anonymous 11/14/2023 02:46 PM	i fully understand what it is
Anonymous 11/14/2023 11:23 PM	I do not understand why I was dismissed when I whistle blew. The policy clearly does not work.
Anonymous 11/15/2023 09:06 AM	No suggestions
Anonymous 11/15/2023 10:07 AM	I understand the whistleblowing but if audit won't do anything about it. Then I think the press should be involved to investigate as not byass.
Anonymous 11/15/2023 10:41 AM	Sessions.
Anonymous 11/15/2023 01:52 PM	Possible one off session on IDEV
Anonymous 11/16/2023 08:16 AM	simple and clear explanation and the consequences,
Anonymous 11/16/2023 06:41 PM	training/info on ldev
Anonymous 11/21/2023 03:04 PM	Brochure and workshop
Anonymous 11/22/2023 09:44 AM	I find the online modules or animations are good as they summarise the points in an easy to access way
Anonymous 11/23/2023 07:59 AM	n/a
Anonymous 11/23/2023 11:29 AM	Real life examples of what to report, even if from other councils or organisations

Optional question (80 response(s), 208 skipped)

Question type: Essay Question

Q12 Which service area do you work in?



Question options

- Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing
 ● Adult Services
● Building Services
- Children and Young People Services
 ● CoporateResources
● Financial Services
● Housing Services
- Human Resources
 ● ICT Services
● Learning and Skills
● Legal and Democratic Services
- Neighbourhood Services and Transport
 ● Place
● Policy and Business Transformation
● Regeneration and Planning
- Resource Management and Safeguarding
 ● Schools
● Shared Regulatory Services
● Social Services
- Standards and Provision
 ● Strategy, Community Learning and Resources

Mandatory Question (288 response(s))
 Question type: Checkbox Question



Speak Out Staff Survey

The Speak Out Hub is the Council's whistleblowing platform.

The survey has been designed to highlight common themes and identify areas for improvement to ensure that the Council's whistleblowing policy continues to protect the organisations finances and reputation while keeping our colleagues and customers safe.

All Vale of Glamorgan Council staff are invited to complete the survey, whether you work in a frontline role, in an office or at home, or in one of our schools.

Please take time to complete the short survey. All responses are anonymous.

Completed paper surveys should be returned to the front desk at the Alps or Civic office.

1. Have you heard of the Council's whistleblowing policy?

Yes

No

2. Have you read the Council's whistleblowing policy?

Yes

No

3. Have you read the Council's whistleblowing 'policy on a page' and/or watched the summary video?

Yes

No

4. What areas are covered in the Council's whistleblowing policy?

(Please select all that apply)

Conduct which is a criminal offence or breach of law

A breach of our Code of Conduct for staff or Councillors

Sexual, physical, or verbal abuse of our clients, employees, contractors or public

Dangerous procedures risking the health & safety of our clients, employees, contractors or public

Unauthorised use of public funds

Suspected fraud or corruption

Damage to the environment (e.g. land, buildings, highways, water, air, waste, energy, transport, natural habitat etc.)

Unethical or improper conduct

Services that fall seriously below approved standards or practice

Failure to follow the Council's policies and procedures



5. Are you aware of the protection available for Whistleblowers?

- Yes
- No

6. If you are not aware of the protection available for whistleblowers, please suggest how the Council could better communicate this.

7. Would you whistleblow?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

8. If you have answered 'no' or 'I don't know', please explain why.

9. Who would you feel most comfortable to report your concerns to?

(Please select all that apply)

- Line manager
- Head of service or department
- Chief Executive / Director / Monitoring Officer
- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer
- Head of Regional Internal Audit Service
- Chair of Governors (Schools only)
- Speak Out Line through Contact OneVale
- Speak Out Line online form on Staffnet
- Speak Out Line email



10. If you have not read the policy, do you feel that you require more information on whistleblowing in another format?

- Yes
- No

11. Please suggest what would help you to better understand whistleblowing?

12. Which service area do you work in?

- Building Services
- Housing Services
- Neighbourhood Services and Transport
- Shared Regulatory Services
- Place
- Resources
- Financial Services
- Human Resources
- ICT Services
- Legal and Democratic Services
- Policy and Business Transformation
- Regeneration and Planning
- Schools
- Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing
- Learning and Skills
- Standards and Provision
- Strategy, Community Learning and Resources
- Adult Services
- Children and Young People Services
- Social Services
- Resource Management and Safeguarding

SPEAK OUT

REPORT
MALPRACTICE IN THE
WORKPLACE



01446 731115

SPEAKOUT@VALEOFGLAMORGAN.GOV.UK

Thank you for completing the survey. To find out more about Speaking Out or how to confidentially report your concerns, visit the **Speak Out Hub**:

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/StaffnetPlus/en/Speak-Out/Speak-Out.aspx>

