



Northumberland
County Council

Corporate Fraud Team

Bribery & Corruption Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Bribery is a criminal offence. The County Council does not, and will not, pay bribes or offer improper inducements to anyone for any purpose nor does it or will it accept bribes or improper inducements.
- 1.2 To use a third party as a conduit to channel bribes to others is a criminal offence. The County Council does not, and will not, engage indirectly in or otherwise encourage bribery.
- 1.3 The County Council is committed to the prevention, deterrence and detection of bribery. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards any type of bribery, corruption or fraud.

2 Policy Objectives

- 2.1 This policy provides a framework to enable employees and members to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies referred to below it will enable employees and members to identify and report a potential breach.
- 2.2 We require all staff, including temporary agency staff and all contractors and their employees working on behalf of the County Council and all elected members to:
 - act honestly and with integrity at all times and to safeguard the Council's resources for which they are responsible
 - comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities.

3 Scope of this Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to all of the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with this policy.
- 3.2 Within the Council the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring rests at all levels. It does not rest solely within assurance and audit functions, but in all business units and corporate functions and members exercising their Council functions.
- 3.3 This policy covers all staff at all levels and grades, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, non-executives, agents, members (including independent members), volunteers and consultants.

4 The County Council's Commitment

- 4.1 The County Council commits to:
 - Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date;
 - Making all employees and members aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy at all times;

- Encouraging its employees and members to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately;
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution;
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery;

5 What is Bribery?

- 5.1 Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided to gain personal, commercial, regulatory or contractual advantage.
- 5.2 There are four criminal offences created by the Bribery Act 2010:
- bribery of another person (section 1) to induce or reward them to perform a function improperly;
 - requesting or accepting a bribe (section 2) as a reward for performing a function improperly;
 - bribing a foreign official (section 6) to gain a business advantage;
 - failing to prevent bribery (section 7);
- 5.3 The last is a corporate offence of failure by a commercial organisation to prevent bribery intended to obtain or retain business, or an advantage in the conduct of business. An organisation will have a defence to this offence if it can show that it had in place adequate procedures (see below) designed to prevent bribery by or of persons associated with it.
- 5.4 An individual guilty of an offence under sections 1, 2 or 6 is liable:
- On conviction in a magistrates court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of 12 months or to a fine not exceeding £5,000, or to both;
 - On conviction in a crown court, to imprisonment for a maximum term of ten years, or to an unlimited fine, or both;
- 5.5 If an organisations is found guilty of an offence under section 7 it is liable to an unlimited fine.

6 What are Adequate Procedures?

- 6.1 Adequate procedures need to be applied proportionately, based on the level of risk guided by the six principles in the Government's Guidance. These principles are not prescriptive. They are intended to be flexible and outcome focussed.
- 6.2 They are:
- 6.3 **Proportionate procedures**

6.4 Procedures to prevent bribery should be proportionate to the bribery risks faced and to the nature, scale and complexity of activities. They are also clear, practical, accessible, effectively implemented and enforced. This policy explains the procedures.

6.5 Top level commitment

6.6 The top-level management should be committed to preventing bribery by persons associated with it. They foster a culture within the organisation in which bribery is never acceptable. This Policy has accordingly been endorsed by the Chief Executive and the Audit Committee.

6.7 Risk Assessment

6.8 The Council assesses the nature and extent of its exposure to potential external and internal risks of bribery routinely and as an integral part of its usual procedures. The assessment is periodic, informed and documented. It includes financial risks but also other risks such as reputational damage.

6.9 Due diligence

6.10 The Council applies due diligence taking a proportionate and risk based approach in respect of persons who perform or will perform services for or on behalf of the council, in order to mitigate identified bribery risks.

6.11 Communication (including training)

6.12 The Council seeks to ensure that its bribery prevention policies and procedures are embedded and understood through communication, including mandatory training that is proportionate to the risks it faces.

6.13 Monitoring and review

6.14 The Council monitors and reviews procedures designed to prevent bribery by persons associated with it and improvements are made where necessary.

The County Council is fully committed to the implementation of these six principles.

7 Directions to Members, Staff & Suppliers 7.1 It is unacceptable to:

- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality with the expectation or hope that a business advantage will be received, or to reward a business advantage already given
- give, promise to give, or offer a payment, gift or hospitality to a government official, agent or representative to “facilitate” or expedite a routine procedure
- accept payment from a third party that you know or suspect is offered with the expectation that it will obtain a business advantage for them

- accept a gift or hospitality from a third party if you know or suspect that it is offered or provided with an expectation that a business advantage will be provided by us in return
- retaliate against or threaten a person who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns under this policy
- engage in activity in breach of this policy.

7.2 Gifts and hospitality

7.3 The County Council policy in relation to gifts and hospitality is clearly outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct.

8 Public Contracts & Failure to Prevent Bribery

8.1 Under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 a company is automatically and perpetually debarred from competing for public contracts where it is convicted of a corruption offence.

8.2 The County Council extends such automatic barring to any organisations convicted of an offence under the Bribery Act 2010 or any similar offence of fraud or dishonesty which might bring the relationship with the Council into disrepute.

9 Staff & Member Responsibilities

9.1 The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those appointed as members, working for the council or under its control. All staff and members are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy.

9.2 You must:

- ensure that you read, understand and comply with this policy
- raise concerns as soon as possible if you believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred, or may occur in the future.

9.3 As well as the possibility of civil and criminal prosecution, all staff that breach this policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

10 Raising a Concern

10.1 The County Council is committed to ensuring that there is a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity. We want each and every member of staff to know how they can raise concerns.

- 10.2 We all have a responsibility to help detect, prevent and report instances of bribery. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption, please report it as soon as possible.
- 10.3 There are multiple channels to help you raise concerns all of which are clearly outlined in the Whistle Blowing Policy.
- 10.4 Concerns can be anonymous. In the event that an incident of bribery, corruption, or wrongdoing is reported, we will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation.
- 10.5 We have clearly defined procedures for investigating fraud, misconduct and non-compliance issues and these will be followed in any investigation of this kind. This is easier and quicker if concerns raised are not anonymous.
- 10.6 Staff who refuse to accept or offer a bribe, or those who raise concerns or report wrongdoing can understandably be worried about the repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- 10.7 We are committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through refusing to take part in bribery or corruption, or because of reporting a concern in good faith.
- 10.8 If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact the Corporate Fraud Manager, the Chief Internal Auditor or the Monitoring Officer. Members with concerns should also contact one of these officers.

11 Linked Policies

- 11.1 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following additional fraud related policies developed by the Corporate Fraud Team:
- Counter Fraud Policy
 - Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- 11.2 As outlined above, the County Council also has a Whistle Blowing Policy which is maintained by HR in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.
- 11.3 For further information on any of these policies or for informal advice on any potential bribery and corruption or fraud related concerns please contact:

Barry Haigh, Corporate Fraud Manager
Telephone: 01670 624273
Email: barry.haigh@northumberland.gov.uk