

Cheshire Fire Authority

Anti-Fraud Policy

1. Introduction

Cheshire Fire Authority is committed to having sound governance arrangements. In managing its arrangements the Authority, as a public body accountable to the taxpayer, is determined to ensure proper accountability and probity in delivering its stated business aims and objectives.

This Anti-Fraud Policy is designed to:-

- help prevent fraud
- promote early detection of fraud and ensure its effective investigation
- where appropriate ensure the recovery of any financial loss caused by fraud.

Fraud encompasses a range of acts and can include:

- criminal deception
- forgery
- blackmail
- theft including the obtaining of a pecuniary advantage for a third party i.e. financial gain or a reduction in a debt or liability
- the intentional distortion of financial statements or other records by persons inside or outside the Authority which is carried out to conceal the theft of assets or otherwise for gain
- conspiracy and the concealment of material facts.

NB: Bribery is dealt with in a separate policy.

2. Policy Statement

The Authority is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps are taken to avoid it being subjected to fraud.

The Authority will:

- promote a fair, equitable and honest approach to service delivery with those providing and receiving services
- actively seek out instances of fraudulent and corrupt practices and pursue the perpetrators to the full extent of the law
- encourage people with concerns about potential fraud to inform the Authority of their suspicions

- treat complaints of potential fraud positively, fairly and equitably
- regularly review its own procedures to ensure they offer effective protection of the Authority's interests and reputation.

To achieve this the Authority will establish, communicate and maintain:

- proper standards
- an anti-fraud culture
- supporting policies and procedures
- reporting and investigation arrangements
- access to information and publicity
- review mechanisms
- data sharing arrangements

3. Strategy Statement

Proper Standards

The Authority's Constitution describes how it operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. It is subject to regular review by the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

Fire Authority Members and employees have a duty to adhere to the Constitution and its provisions and comply with the respective Codes of Conduct that apply to them.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that Members and employees receive suitable training and continuing professional development in order to assist them in the delivery of their duties.

Senior Officers are responsible for the maintenance of sound internal control systems, procedures and records. They are required to formally review their control environment and document their findings in support of the Authority's published Annual Governance Statement.

Culture

The Authority supports and promotes zero tolerance to any form of fraud and will pursue perpetrators to the full extent of the law. It expects all Members of the Authority, employees, consultants, contractors, service users and any other external and partner organisations to uphold the highest standards of integrity in their dealings for, and on behalf of, the Authority.

Policies and Procedures

In order to promote a strong anti-fraud culture an infrastructure of preventative measures have been adopted in the form of policies and procedures that Members and employees are required to comply with.

Key policies and procedures include:

- Code of Conduct for employees (which includes the Whistleblowing Procedure)
- Code of Conduct for Members
- Financial Regulations
- Human Resources policies including recruitment and disciplinary procedures

NB: The Anti-Bribery Policy supplements this policy.

Reporting

Members and employees must report any concerns they may have regarding potential fraud

They should report the matter to:

- Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
- Director of Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)
- Treasurer (Section 151 Officer)

The Authority's Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing) and Corporate Complaints Policy provide a route for raising concerns with the Authority and detail the safeguards and support available.

Investigation

Investigation into fraud will normally be carried out by the Internal Audit Service who will liaise with the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, Director of Governance and Commissioning and Treasurer.

Where there is evidence of suspected fraud the matter will be referred to the police to consider whether a criminal investigation should take place.

The Authority will seek to recover losses incurred as a result of any fraud.

Access to Information and Publicity

The policies and procedures referred to in this document are available on the Authority's website and intranet. The Authority will seek to publicise proven cases of fraud or corruption through these mechanisms and via the local press.

4. Review

The Authority will ensure that this Policy is reviewed every 2 years.

Authority policies and procedures outlined within this document are also subject to regular review.

5. Sharing Information

The Authority is committed to working with other agencies in the detection and prevention of fraud.

Information will be shared internally and with government departments and other agencies for the purposes of the prevention and detection of fraud. This information will be shared in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act.

The Authority also participates in a national data sharing exercise, The National Fraud Initiative, to enable the proactive detection of fraud.

6. Contacts

Further advice or assistance can be obtained from the following:-

Internal

Allan Rainford – Treasurer

Email: Allan.rainford@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Tel: 01606 868845

Andrew Leadbetter – Director of Governance and Commissioning

Email: Andrew.leadbetter@cheshirefire.gov.uk

Tel: 01606 868456

Internal Audit Services, provided by the Mersey Internal Audit Agency

Anne-Marie Harrop - Audit Manager

Email: Anne-Marie.Harrop@miaa.nhs.uk

Tel: 0161 743 2029

External Audit, provided by Grant Thornton UK LLP

Liz Luddington – Manager

Email: Liz.A.Luddington@uk.gt.com

Tel: 0161 953 6900