



Northumberland
County Council

Corporate Fraud Team

Anti-Money Laundering Policy

February 2025

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Northumberland County Council is committed to the highest levels of compliance, and probity. This policy clearly outlines the duties and responsibilities of all Council employees, volunteers, elected members and contractors working for and on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 Legislation places obligations on certain areas of local authority business which require local authorities to establish internal procedures to prevent the use of their services for money laundering.
- 1.3 The legislation in respect of Money Laundering is set out in the following:
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 as amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013 and the Serious Crime Act 2015;
 - The Money Laundering Regulations 2007;
 - The Terrorism Act 2000 as amended by the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, the Terrorism Act 2006 and the Terrorism Act 2000 and Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (Amendment) Regulations 2007
 - Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005

2 Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all employees of the Council and aims to maintain the high standards of conduct which currently exist within the Council by preventing criminal activity through money laundering.
- 2.2 The Policy sets out the procedures which must be followed (for example the reporting of suspicions of money laundering activity) to enable the Council to comply with its legal obligations.
- 2.3 The guidance outlined in this policy will protect both employees and the Council and minimise the risk of breaches of legislation.

3 What is Money Laundering?

- 3.1 Under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, money laundering means:
 - concealing, disguising, converting, transferring criminal property or removing it from the UK (section 327 of the Act);
 - entering into or becoming concerned in an arrangement which you know or suspect facilitates the acquisition, retention, use or control of criminal property by or on behalf of another person (section 328);
 - acquiring, using or possessing criminal property (section 329); or
 - failing to disclose suspected money laundering.
- 3.2 The legislation covers the proceeds of all crimes, regardless of the level and is not limited to just organised crimes.
- 3.3 Whilst the risk of contravening the legislation is low, it is important that employees are familiar with their legal responsibilities. Should any suspicion of money laundering activity arise, an employee is required to make an 'authorised disclosure' to an approved person. For Northumberland County Council the approved person is the Money Laundering Reporting Officer ("MLRO").

4 What are the Obligations on the Council?

- 4.1 Organisations conducting "relevant business" must:
 - appoint a MLRO to receive disclosures from employees of money laundering activity (their own or anyone else's);
 - implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering;
 - maintain client identification procedures in certain circumstances; and
 - maintain record keeping procedures.

5 The Money Laundering Reporting Officer

- 5.1 The Officer nominated to receive disclosures about money laundering activity within the Council is:

Section 151 Officer
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

- 5.2 In the absence of the Section 151 Officer, the Deputy Section 151 Officer is authorised to deputise for her and can be contacted at County Hall at the above address.

6 Disclosure Procedure

Reporting to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer

- 6.1 Where you know or suspect that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place, or become concerned that your involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under sections 327 – 329 of the Act, you must disclose this as soon as practicable to the MLRO. The disclosure should be within “hours” of the information coming to your attention, not weeks or months later.

YOU MAY BE LIABLE TO PROSECUTION IF YOU DO NOT REPORT YOUR SUSPICIONS.

- 6.2 Your disclosure should be made to the MLRO using the pro-forma report attached at Appendix 1. The report must include as much detail as possible, for example:
- Full details of the people involved (including yourself, if relevant), e.g. name, date of birth, address, company names, directorships, phone numbers, etc.
 - Full details of the nature of their/your involvement - If you are concerned that your involvement in the transaction would amount to a prohibited act under sections 327 – 329 of the Act, then your report must include all relevant details, as you will need consent from the National Crime Agency (“NCA”), via the MLRO, to take any further part in the transaction - this is the case even if the client gives instructions for the matter to proceed before such consent is given. You should therefore make it clear in the report if such consent is required and clarify whether there are any deadlines for giving such consent e.g. a completion date or court deadline;
 - The types of money laundering activity involved - if possible, cite the section number(s) under which the report is being made e.g. a principal money laundering offence under section 327 – 329 of the Act, or general reporting requirement under section 330 of the Act, or both;
 - The dates of such activities, including whether the transactions have happened, are on-going or are imminent;
 - Where they took place;
 - How they were undertaken;
 - The (likely) amount of money/assets involved;

- Why, exactly, you are suspicious – the MLRO will require full reasons along with any other available information to enable her to make a sound judgement as to whether there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion of money laundering and to enable her to prepare her report to the NCA, where appropriate. You should also enclose copies of any relevant supporting documentation.
- 6.3 Once you have reported the matter to the MLRO you must follow any directions she may give you. You must NOT make any further enquiries into the matter yourself; any necessary investigation will be undertaken by the NCA. Simply report your suspicions to the MLRO who will refer the matter on to the NCA if appropriate. All employees will be required to co-operate with the MLRO and the authorities during any subsequent money laundering investigation.
- 6.4 Similarly, at no time and under no circumstances should you voice any suspicions to the person(s) whom you suspect of money laundering, even if the NCA has given consent to a particular transaction proceeding, without the specific consent of the MLRO; otherwise, you may commit a criminal offence of “tipping off”.
- 6.5 Do not, therefore, make any reference on a client file to a report having been made to the MLRO – should the client exercise their right to see the file, then such a note will obviously tip them off to the report having been made and may render you liable to prosecution. The MLRO will keep the appropriate records in a confidential manner.

Consideration of the disclosure by the MLRO

- 6.6 Upon receipt of a disclosure report, the MLRO will note the date of receipt on her section of the report and acknowledge receipt of it. She should also advise you of the timescale within which she expects to respond to you.
- 6.7 The MLRO will consider the report and any other available internal information she thinks relevant e.g.:
- reviewing other transaction patterns and volumes;
 - the length of any business relationship involved;
 - the number of any one-off transactions and linked one-off transactions;
 - any identification evidence held and undertake such other reasonable inquiries she thinks appropriate in order to ensure that all available information is taken into account in deciding whether a report to the NCA is required (such enquiries being made in such a way as to avoid any appearance of tipping off those involved). The MLRO may also need to discuss the report with you.
- 6.8 Once the MLRO has evaluated the disclosure report and any other relevant information, she must make a timely determination as to whether:
- there is actual or suspected money laundering taking place; or
 - there are reasonable grounds to know or suspect that is the case; and

- whether she needs to seek consent from the NCA for a particular transaction to proceed.
- 6.9 Where the MLRO does so conclude, then she must disclose the matter as soon as practicable to the NCA on their standard report form and in the prescribed manner, unless she has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure to the NCA (for example, if you are a lawyer and you wish to claim legal professional privilege for not disclosing the information).
- 6.10 Where the MLRO suspects money laundering but has a reasonable excuse for nondisclosure, then she must note the report accordingly; she can then immediately give her consent for any ongoing or imminent transactions to proceed.
- 6.11 In cases where legal professional privilege may apply, the MLRO must liaise with the legal adviser to decide whether there is a reasonable excuse for not reporting the matter to the NCA.
- 6.12 Where consent is required from the NCA for a transaction to proceed, then the transaction(s) in question must not be undertaken or completed until the NCA has specifically given consent, or there is deemed consent through the expiration of the relevant time limits without objection from the NCA.
- 6.13 Where the MLRO concludes that there are no reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering then she shall mark the report accordingly and give her consent for any ongoing or imminent transaction(s) to proceed.
- 6.14 All disclosure reports referred to the MLRO and reports made by her to the NCA must be retained by the MLRO in a confidential file kept for that purpose, for a minimum of five years.
- 6.15 The MLRO commits a criminal offence if she knows or suspects, or has reasonable grounds to do so, through a disclosure being made to her, that another person is engaged in money laundering, and she does not disclose this as soon as practicable to the NCA.
- 6.16 Further information on how to make a report to the NCA is available from [Contact us - National Crime Agency](#)

7 Client Identification Procedure

- 7.1 Where the Council is carrying out relevant business (accountancy, audit and certain legal services) and:
- a. forms an ongoing business relationship with a client; or
 - b. undertakes a one-off transaction involving payment by or to the client of 15,000 Euro (approximately £13,000) or more;
 - c. undertakes a series of linked one-off transactions involving total payment by or to the client(s) of 15,000 Euro (approximately £13,000) or more; or

- d. it is known or suspected that a one-off transaction (or a series of them) involves money laundering then this Client Identification Procedure must be followed before any business is undertaken for that client. Please note that unlike the reporting procedure, the client identification procedure is restricted to those operating relevant business, i.e., Financial Services and Legal Services.

7.2 In the above circumstances, employees in the relevant unit of the Council must obtain satisfactory evidence of the identity of the prospective client, as soon as practicable after instructions are received (unless evidence of the client has already been obtained). This applies to existing clients, as well as new ones.

7.3 Once instructions to provide relevant business have been received, and it has been established that any of paragraphs 7.1 (a) to (d) apply, evidence of identity should be obtained as follows.

Internal clients:

7.4 Appropriate evidence of identity for Council divisions will be signed, written instructions on Council headed notepaper or an email on the internal email system at the outset of a particular matter. Such correspondence should then be placed on the Council's client file along with a prominent note explaining which correspondence constitutes the evidence and where it is located.

External Clients:

7.5 For external clients of the Council, appropriate evidence of identity will be written instructions on the organisation's official letterhead at the outset of the matter or an email from the organisation's e-communication system. Such correspondence should then be placed on the Council's client file along with a prominent note explaining which correspondence constitutes the evidence and where it is located.

7.6 With instructions from new clients, or further instructions from a client not well known to you, you may wish to seek additional evidence of the identity of key individuals in the organisation and of the organisation itself.

7.7 Check the organisations website to confirm the business address, companies house to confirm directors, address nature of business and their status. You may be able to visit their business address and meet key contacts in person.

7.8 In all cases, the evidence should be retained for at least five years from the end of the business relationship or one-off transaction(s).

7.9 If satisfactory evidence of identity is not obtained at the outset of the matter then the business relationship or one-off transaction(s) cannot proceed any further.

8 Record Keeping Procedures

8.1 Each section of the Council conducting relevant business must maintain records of:

- client identification evidence obtained; and;
- details of all relevant business transactions carried out for clients for at least five years.

This is so that they may be used as evidence in any subsequent investigation by the authorities into money laundering.

8.2 The precise nature of the records is not prescribed by law however they must be capable of providing an audit trail during any subsequent investigation, for example distinguishing the client and the relevant transaction and recording in what form any funds were received or paid. In practice, the divisions of the Council will be routinely making records of work carried out for, or by, clients in the course of normal business and these should suffice in this regard.

9 Conclusion

9.1 The legislative requirements concerning anti-money laundering procedures are lengthy and complex. This Policy has been written so as to enable the Council to meet the legal requirements in a way which is proportionate to the very low risk to the Council of contravening the legislation.

9.2 Should you have any concerns whatsoever regarding any transactions then you should contact the MLRO.

10 Linked Policies

10.1 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy developed by the Corporate Fraud Team.

10.2 The County Council also has a Raising Concerns at Work Policy which is maintained by HR in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer.

10.3 For further information on any of these policies or for advice on any potential fraud related concerns please contact:

Amy Hodgson, Corporate Fraud Manager
Telephone: 01670 624272
Email: amy.hodgson@northumberland.gov.uk

11 Further information

11.1 Further information can be obtained from the Corporate Fraud Manager, MLRO or from one of the following websites -

- <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/money-laundering-and-illicit-finance>
- <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/anti-money-laundering>
- <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/anti-money-laundering/money-laundering-warning-signs>
- <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/money-laundering-offences>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/money-laundering-regulations-your-responsibilities>

APPENDIX 1 – Report of Suspected Money Laundering

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Report to Money Laundering Reporting Officer, re money laundering activity

To: Section 151 Officer

Northumberland County Council - Money Laundering Reporting Officer

From:
[insert name of employee]

Division:..... Ext/Tel No:.....
[insert post, title and section]

DETAILS OF SUSPECTED OFFENCE

Name(s) and address(es) of person(s) involved:
[if a company/public body please include details of nature of business]

--

Nature, value and timing of activity involved:
[Please include full details e.g. what, when, where, how. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary]

--

Nature of suspicions regarding such activity:
[Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary]

--

Has any investigation been undertaken (as far as you are aware)? Yes / No
If yes, please include details below:

Have you discussed your suspicions with anyone else? Yes / No
If yes, please specify below, explaining why such discussion was necessary:

Have you consulted any supervisory body guidance re money laundering? (e.g. the Law Society) Yes / No
If yes, please specify below:

Do you feel you have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the matter to the NCA? (are you a lawyer and wish to claim legal professional privilege?) Yes / No
If yes, please set out full details below:

Are you involved in a transaction which might be a prohibited act under sections 327- 329 of the Act which requires appropriate consent from the NCA? Yes / No
If yes, please enclose details in the box below:

Please set out below any other information you feel is relevant:
(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

Please do not discuss the content of this report with anyone you believe to be involved in the suspected money laundering activity described. To do so may constitute a tipping off offence, which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment.

THE FOLLOWING PART OF THIS FORM IS FOR COMPLETION BY THE MONEY LAUNDERING REPORTING OFFICER

Date report received:

Date receipt of report acknowledged:

CONSIDERATION OF DISCLOSURE:

Action plan:

OUTCOME OF CONSIDERATION OF DISCLOSURE:

Are there reasonable grounds for suspecting money laundering activity?

If there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, will a report be made to the NCA?
[Please delete as appropriate] **Yes / No**

If yes -

1. Confirm date of report to NCA:

2. Details of liaison with the NCA regarding the report:

3. Notice Period: to

4. Moratorium Period: to

5. Is consent required from the NCA to any on-going or imminent transactions which would otherwise be prohibited acts? **Yes / No**

6. If yes, please confirm full details:

7. Date consent received from NCA:

8. Date consent given by you to employee:

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering, but you do not intend to report the matter to the NCA, please set out below the reason(s) for non-disclosure:

Date consent given by you to employee for any prohibited act transactions to proceed:

Other relevant information:

Signed:

Dated:

THIS REPORT TO BE RETAINED FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS

APPENDIX 2 - Guidance Notes

Possible signs of money laundering

It is impossible to give a definitive list of ways in which to spot money laundering or how to decide whether to make a report to the MLRO. The following are types of risk factors which may, either alone or cumulatively with other factors, suggest the possibility of money laundering activity:

General

- A new client;
- A secretive client: e.g., refuses to provide requested information without a reasonable explanation;
- Concerns about the honesty, integrity, identity or location of a client;
- Illogical third party transactions: unnecessary routing or receipt of funds from third parties or through third party accounts;
- Involvement of an unconnected third party without logical reason or explanation;
- Payment of a substantial sum in cash (over £10,000);
- Overpayments by a client;
- Absence of an obvious legitimate source of the funds;
- Movement of funds overseas, particularly to a higher risk country or tax haven;
- Where, without reasonable explanation, the size, nature and frequency of transactions or instructions (or the size, location or type of a client) is out of line with normal expectations;
- A transaction without obvious legitimate purpose or which appears uneconomic, inefficient or irrational;
- The cancellation or reversal of an earlier transaction;
- Requests for release of client account details other than in the normal course of business;
- Companies and trusts: extensive use of corporate structures and trusts in circumstances where the client's needs are inconsistent with the use of such structures;

- Poor business records or internal accounting controls;
- A previous transaction for the same client which has been, or should have been, reported to the MLRO;

Property Matters

- Unusual property investment transactions if there is no apparent investment purpose or rationale;
- Instructions to receive and pay out money where there is no linked substantive property transaction involved (surrogate banking);
- Re property transactions, funds received for deposits or prior to completion from an unexpected source or where instructions are given for settlement funds to be paid to an unexpected destination;

Facts which tend to suggest that something odd is happening may be sufficient for a reasonable suspicion of money laundering to arise. In short, the money laundering offences apply to your own actions and to matters in which you become involved.

If you become aware that your involvement in a matter may amount to money laundering then you must discuss it with the MLRO and not take any further action until you have received, through the MLRO, the consent of the National Crime Agency (“NCA”). The failure to report money laundering obligations, referred to below, relate also to your knowledge or suspicions of others, through your work.

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of what the Council does and who it can provide services for, instances of suspected money laundering are unlikely to arise very often, if at all; however, we must be mindful of the legislative requirements, as failure to comply with them may render individuals liable to prosecution.

Please take prompt and proper action if you have any suspicions and feel free to consult the MLRO at any time should you be concerned regarding a matter.