The role of whistleblowing in the regulation of food

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The project: whistleblowing and food regulation

- What is whistleblowing?
- What is food regulation?
- Food-borne illness – many illness; hospitalisations; deaths; cost to economy.
- What role should whistleblowers play?
- South Wales – failure by employees to disclose what was happening.
The past: complaint focus

- Consumer complaints - primary method of receiving information about non-compliance.
- Whistleblowing - underexplored and treated the same as a complaint.
- Should be treated differently.
- Lack of standardised approach to dealing with whistleblowers.
- Many different regulators - information sharing is important.
Methodology – how are we investigating?

• Research questions
  – What role does whistleblowing play in food regulation? How many disclosures received?
  – How do authorities deal with whistleblowing disclosures? What procedures are in place? Are they followed?
  – Where do disclosures lead?

• How are we going to answer these?
  – FOIA Requests
Early Findings

• Small pilot sample – 40 authorities.
• Authorities are receiving whistleblowing disclosures.
• Inconsistent handling of disclosures.
• Some authorities treating same as consumer complaints.
• Non-compliance with best practice.
What’s next?

• Move from pilot phase.
• Send out all FOIA requests.
• Supplement requests with semi-structured interviews to explore deeper.
• Data analysis.
• Outputs
Questions?