

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This policy sets out how employees, volunteers, students and others working in the setting may raise concerns about wrongdoing, poor or unsafe practice in the setting, particularly where it affects the welfare or safety of children, staff, or others.

These procedures are in place to ensure concerns are raised in the public interest, handled appropriately, and that individuals feel supported and protected. This policy is required under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework from **September 2025**.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, students, volunteers in the childcare setting.

Definition of Whistleblowing

A *whistleblowing concern* is any reasonable belief that wrongdoing, malpractice, negligence, poor or unsafe practice is occurring, has occurred, or is likely to occur. In the context of early years provision, this would especially include concerns that:

- A child or children are being harmed or at risk of harm.
- Safeguarding or welfare requirements are not being met.
- A staff member's conduct or practice raises concerns about their suitability to work with children.
- Legal, statutory, regulatory, financial or health and safety obligations are violated.

Principles

- All whistleblowing concerns will be taken seriously and treated confidentially.
- Staff will not suffer any disadvantage, retaliation, or unfair treatment for raising concerns in good faith.
- The setting will foster a culture of openness, transparency, and accountability.
- Anyone raising a concern can expect a response outlining how it will be handled, to the extent that confidentiality permits.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Internal Reporting

Staff should raise concerns in the first instance with the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or setting manager. If the concern relates to the DSL/manager, it should be reported to the **registered person / proprietor / governing body**.

When raising a concern, provide as much detail as possible, including:

- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant dates, times and locations.
- Names of any persons involved or any witnesses.

- Copies of any documents that support the concern.

The recipient of the concern will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the concern.
2. Record the concern and any relevant information.
3. Investigate or arrange for investigation.
4. Communicate outcomes or next steps where appropriate.

External Reporting

If the individual feels unable to raise concerns internally, or feels that their concerns have not been addressed appropriately, they should escalate externally, including:

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** (for allegations against adults working with children)
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line** (e.g., 0800 028 0285 / help@nspcc.org.uk)
- **Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline** (see latest contact details on GOV.UK)
- The **Police** (if a criminal offence is suspected)

Where a concern relates to a child at risk of immediate harm, contact emergency services (999) or local children's social care.

Protection of Whistleblowers

Under this policy and relevant UK law (e.g., the Public Interest Disclosure Act), staff raising concerns in good faith:

- Will not face retaliation or be dismissed for whistleblowing.
- Will have their identity kept confidential, where reasonably possible.
- Will receive support during any investigation.

Retaliation against a whistleblower is itself a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action.

Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

All concerns raised under this policy will be recorded and handled confidentially.

Records will be kept securely, including:

- Details of concerns raised.
- Investigations undertaken.
- Actions taken.
- Outcomes and lessons learned.

Data will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.
