

Whistleblowing

Concerns that should be raised via the Whistle Blowing Policy may be in relation to the actions or behaviours of other staff, students or volunteers, or about something that is perceived as:

- unlawful
- failing to comply with the setting's policy and procedures
- poor practice
- improper conduct.

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

All staff, students and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.

The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff, students and volunteers.

The setting will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.

The setting will do its best to protect a whistle blower's identity when he/she raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g., disciplinary procedure, the worker may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.

In some circumstances the setting may have to disclose the identity of the worker without his/her consent.

Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff, students and volunteers who raise concerns.

Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.

The setting will not tolerate malicious allegations. This may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Staff, students and volunteers can raise concerns (no matter how small they may appear) internally as a matter of course, and receive feedback on any action taken.

Concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Staff and volunteers are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

Staff and volunteers can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the setting response and seek external advice and guidance.

Issues raised are addressed via other procedures and policies as appropriate, e.g., safeguarding policy, allegations against an adult working in a setting, grievance, disciplinary, health and safety.

Appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

Raising a Concern

Staff, students and volunteers should raise concerns with a member of the management team using the log of concern form. If this is not appropriate a member of the committee should be notified.

Investigation

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. All matters raised, **with the exception of allegations of abuse against a staff member, or unlawful activity**, will be investigated internally.

The appropriate person/s will investigate the concerns thoroughly, ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days.

The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and whom to contact should the staff member be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter.

If the investigation cannot be completed within the timescale above, the staff member should receive a response that indicates:

- progress to date
- how the matter is being dealt with
- how long it will take to provide a final response.

In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with the individual raising the concern), will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that raise issues that fall within the scope of other policies/procedures, will be addressed under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved at this initial stage simply, by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern, without the need for further investigation.

If you do not feel that the complaint has been dealt with effectively or you still have concerns, you have a right to refer your concerns to Ofsted.

Allegations of abuse against adults who work or volunteer in the setting

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, the following action will be taken (as per the 'Allegations of Abuse against Adults who Work or Volunteer in a Childcare Setting' flowchart and guidance):

- The setting will ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- The setting will not investigate and immediately contact the Early Years Safeguarding Manager, who will notify the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). (If the Early Years Safeguarding Manager is not contactable, the setting will contact LADO directly.)
- The setting will notify Ofsted of a significant incident.
- If the LADO decides that there is a child protection concern, external/internal agencies (e.g., police) will be informed by the LADO and the setting will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised.
- It may be necessary for the employer to suspend the alleged perpetrator. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
- If it is agreed that there is not a child protection concern, the setting will investigate further and feedback the outcome of the investigation to the Early Years Safeguarding Manager and Ofsted.