



# **Whistleblowing Policy**

## **1. Purpose**

This policy sets out the arrangements for staff, volunteers, and others connected with the provision to raise genuine concerns (“whistleblowing”) about wrongdoing, malpractice, or risks affecting the safety and wellbeing of children. This policy was created in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Our organisation is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. Children’s safety, welfare, and voices are at the centre of everything we do.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All employees (permanent, temporary, and agency).
- Volunteers, governors/trustees, and contractors.
- Any individual connected to the provision who has concerns relating to safeguarding, misconduct, or professional practice.

## **3. What is Whistleblowing?**

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information about suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to:

- Safeguarding and protection of children.
- Criminal activity, fraud, or financial malpractice.
- Breaches of professional boundaries or policies.
- Neglect of duty, unsafe practices, or risks to health and safety.
- Attempts to cover up any of the above.

This policy is not for day-to-day concerns, grievances, or complaints (these are managed through separate procedures).

## **4. Principles**

- Children first: Any concern relating to the welfare or safety of children must be treated as a safeguarding priority.

- Safe culture: Staff and volunteers are encouraged to speak up without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.
- Confidentiality: All whistleblowing reports will be handled in confidence. Identities will be protected unless disclosure is legally required.
- Fairness: Concerns raised in good faith will never lead to disciplinary action, even if unproven. Malicious allegations may be treated as misconduct.

## **5. Reporting Concerns**

If you become aware of a concern, you should:

1. Raise the issue as soon as possible with your Line Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
2. If the concern relates to your Line Manager or DSL, report directly to the Senior Manager/Head of Provision.
3. If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, you may contact:
  - The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
  - Ofsted (0300 123 4666).
  - NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline (0800 028 0285).

Concerns can be reported verbally, in writing, or via email. Reports should include as much detail as possible.

## **6. How Concerns Will Be Handled**

- Concerns will be acknowledged within 5 working days.
- The issue will be reviewed by a manager with appropriate knowledge and authority.
- If safeguarding issues are raised, the matter will be referred immediately to the DSL and relevant statutory agencies.
- Staff will be updated on the progress and outcome wherever possible.

## **7. Protection and Support for Whistleblowers**

- Whistleblowers will be protected from harassment, victimisation, or disadvantage.
- Support will be offered, including access to supervision, HR advice, or external counselling services where appropriate.
- Anonymous reports will be considered, but open reporting is encouraged to allow thorough investigation.

## **8. Responsibilities**

- All staff and volunteers must familiarise themselves with this policy and speak up if they see risks or wrongdoing.

- Managers and DSLs must ensure concerns are taken seriously, investigated promptly, and escalated appropriately.
- Trustees/governors must oversee policy implementation and ensure a safe culture across the organisation.

## **9. Monitoring & Review**

- All whistleblowing concerns and outcomes will be logged securely.
- The policy will be reviewed annually (or sooner if required by law or learning from practice).
- Lessons learned will inform training, supervision, and organisational improvement.

## **10. Linked Policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct & Professional Boundaries Policy
- Health and Safety Policy