

Whistle Blowing Policy and Procedure

At Little Oaks, we believe that all involved in promoting and providing the care and education to the children and families within our community must do so with the highest standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability.

All staff, committee members, volunteers and placement students have a responsibility and duty to promote and abide by these standards at all times.

Therefore, all members of staff, committee members and other interested parties have a duty to disclose any aspects of others' practice or conduct that may be detrimental to the interests of Little Oaks, be in conflict with the ethos and principles of Little Oaks or that may compromise the care and education provided to the children and families within our community. This practice is known as "whistle blowing".

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in relation to raising concerns.
- To ensure all staff and volunteers understand the protocol and procedure for raising concerns.
- To reassure staff and volunteers that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith.

The whistle blowing procedure should be followed in all the following instances:

- Criminal conduct or activities.
- Conduct that does or could result in a health and safety risk.
- Unlawful damage to the Little Oaks building or its contents.
- Abusive behaviour towards children, other staff members, parents and carers or volunteers.
- Fraud.
- The unauthorised use of funds.
- Discriminatory practice.
- Serious breaches of confidentiality.
- Any other conduct that results in a member of staff being in breach of their contract.
- Any activity that may compromise the Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service status of the concerned staff or committee member.

Procedure

- In the first instance the concern should be raised verbally or in writing with the Managers.
- In the case of the Managers being implicated in the concern, it should be raised with the Chair of the Committee.
- In the absence of the Managers, the concern should be raised with the Deputy and in the absence of the Chair with the Vice-Chair.
- The concern should be raised as soon as possible. An explanation will be sought for any delay.
- The concern needs to include dates, times and specifics, any relevant background

information and any other details deemed necessary.

- Once the concern has been raised that member of staff or volunteer has "done their duty". He or she may or may not receive feedback on the outcome of the raised concern. However, it is reasonable to expect that he or she will receive reassurances that the concern has been investigated and will receive enough feedback to be able to make a judgement as to whether it has been dealt with in a satisfactory manner.
- The Managers or Chair of the Committee will begin investigating the concern within 48 hours of receiving it.
- The investigation may include interviewing other staff members, parents and in some cases children. Extreme care will be taken if interviewing children and expert guidance sought if needed.
- A written log will be kept on all whistle blowing. This will be stored in a lockable filing cabinet.
- If, at any time, it is considered a child may have been put at risk then the Child Protection Policy and Procedure will be applied and will take precedence.
- If the concern implicates someone in criminal activity and there are felt to be grounds for the concern, then the police and/or other bodies will be informed and their advice followed.
- It may be deemed necessary to suspend one or more members of staff during the process. This will be done on full pay and in no way implies guilt.

Outcome

Whistle blowing could result in one or more of the below outcomes:

- It is felt that no further action is needed.
- Training or mentoring is needed for a member of staff.
- Verbal or written warnings are issued.
- Staff dismissal.
- Legal proceedings.
- A review of policies and practice.

Sharing of outcomes:

- Any resulting actions will be shared on a "need to know" basis that balances the needs to protect the privacy and anonymity of those involved and the need to protect the reputation and quality of provision of Little Oaks. The "need to know" criteria will be decided upon by the Managers, the Chair or after consultation between the two.

Aftermath:

- If the whistle blower experiences victimisation following the raising of the concern, then this could be considered as work place bullying and relevant procedures followed.

Dissatisfaction with the outcome

The following should be pursued by any whistle blower dissatisfied with the outcome and who has genuine reason to believe that there are legitimate concerns:

- Ofsted
- The local safeguarding board
- The police
- Protect Advice Line (formerly Public Concern at Work) <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

Staff and volunteers must remember at all times that the above takes precedence over the keeping of confidences. Any whistle blowing must be done so in good faith and with no malice.

See also:

Child Protection Policy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Recruitment and Employment Policy
Photography Policy
Behaviour Management Policy
Social Networking Policy
Mobile Phone Policy
Nappy Changing Policy

Date of Review	Summary of Changes Made	Signed on behalf of the committee	Role of signatory
November 2021	Updated Protect Advice Line - Historic review	N/A	N/A
January 2023 - January 2025	Historic policy reviews	N/A	N/A
November 2025	Policy review table added	<i>Emily McGurk</i>	Secretary
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Policy effective from November 2021