

WHISTLE BLOWING PROCEDURE

There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to raise a grievance relating to their employment and procedures to ensure the working environment is free from harassment and bullying. This Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to cover major concerns of staff and/or committee members that fall outside the scope of these procedures. These include:

- conduct which a member of staff/committee may consider to be a criminal offence;
- disclosure relating to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other staff;
- possible fraud or corruption;
- breaches of procedures;
- environmental risks;
- failure to comply with legal obligations;
- sexual, physical or verbal abuse of children, parents, staff, committee member or any other behaviour which a member of staff/committee genuinely finds unacceptable or inappropriate;
- other unethical conduct;
- the deliberate concealing of information relating to any of the above matters.

In short, any serious concerns that a member of staff/committee member has about any aspect of their employment can be reported under this Policy.

These procedures are in addition to any other statutory reporting procedures that may be applicable.

Protection

This Policy makes it clear that everyone can speak up without fear of harassment, victimisation (including informal pressure), discrimination or disadvantage. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or other procedures that already affect the member of staff/committee. There will be no 'come back' if a member of staff/committee reasonably believes that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

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Roles and responsibilities

The Pre-school accepts that the decision to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable. The Pre-school is committed to supporting individuals through the process and protecting them from any 'come back', victimisation or harassment. Concerns reported will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. Individuals who genuinely believe that people they work with are behaving in a way that seems wrong or have a serious concern about an aspect of service will be doing their duty and acting in the public interest by speaking out.

How to raise a concern

The procedure seeks to encourage and enable individuals to disclose information through appropriate channels first, rather than going directly to an outside person or body. As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with:

Carrie Gelder – Pre-school Leader

01929 426570 mountscar.cygnets@googlemail.com

This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of any wrongdoing. Staff/Committee members can also raise concerns with:

Beth Harrison – Pre-school Chairperson

As a third option (depending on the area of concern) the staff/committee member can speak directly to:

Nathan Silk Early years support and advice office Tel: 01305 228438 / 07769952901

Nathan.silk@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Liz Curtis-Jones Early Years 01305 225601

OR

For allegations against the staff:

LADO - contact Anne Shaw 01305 221122 lado@dorsetcc.gov.uk

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Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Individuals who wish to make a written report are advised to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reasons for making the disclosure. This will make the investigation easier to complete.

Although a member of staff/committee is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, they will need to demonstrate that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

Procedure

The Pre-school will respond to any concerns raised. In order to protect a member of staff/committee who raises a concern and those accused of wrong-doing, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

The Leader or committee will not investigate but will refer to the local authority.

Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, conduct or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. Individuals will be told how the Pre-school proposes to deal with a concern within ten working days of the concern being brought to the attention of the pre-school.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal an individual's identity, if they so wish. However, while making all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the matter as a whole, at a certain stage in the investigation it may be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons the allegations concern. All concerns raised within the remit of this procedure will be assessed to determine if

the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant. There should be a substantial reason for doing so, such as a real risk of personal harm.

Complainants should be aware however, that their identity may be revealed by inference.

Untrue allegations

The Pre-school accepts that deciding to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable.

If a member of staff/committee makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her.

If, however, a member of staff/committee makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

If a member of staff/committee does not wish to report their concerns to the leader or committee they may take them direct to the appropriate organisation or body that is the early years team or LADO (details as above).

Signed:  Chairperson