

1.7 Whistle Blowing Policy and Procedure

Whistle blowing encourages and enables employees and committee volunteers to raise serious concerns within the organisation of Little Saints Community Preschool Community Preschool. We are committed to the highest standards of openness and accountability and take malpractice seriously. All staff, committee members, and volunteers have a right and a duty to report concerns of malpractice that are in the public interest. In line with that commitment we expect employees and others that we deal with who have serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice their concerns.

By using this policy we aim to:

- Provide avenues for relevant parties to raise concerns in confidence and receive feedback on any action taken.
- Ensure that they receive a response to their concerns, make sure they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.
- Reassure them that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have reasonable belief that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

Little Saints Community Preschool recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If what is being said is true, there should be nothing to fear because the relevant party will be doing their duty to their employer and those that Little Saints Community Preschool provides a service for. All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistle blower if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness.

Little Saints Community Preschool is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. Little Saints Community Preschool will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect their staff when they raise a concern. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affect the staff.

This policy encourages the staff however to put their name to the concern whenever possible. Please note that:

- Staff/volunteers must disclose the information in good faith.
- Staff/volunteers must believe it to be substantially true.
- Staff/volunteers must not act maliciously or make false allegations.
- Staff/volunteers must not seek any personal gain.

Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the management committee. In exercising this discretion the factors taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern; and
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the person who made the disclosure. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the informant.

The whistle blowing policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. These include:

- Conduct which is an offence or breach of law.
- Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice.
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees.
- Damage to the environment.
- The unauthorised use of funds.
- Possible fraud and corruption.
- Sexual or physical abuse of parents, carers or staff or
- Other unethical conduct

Thus, any serious concerns that staff have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of employees of Little Saints Community Preschool or others acting on behalf of Little Saints Community Preschool can be reported under the whistle blowing policy. This may be about something that:

- Makes anyone feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, their experience or the standards they believe Little Saints Community Preschool subscribes to; or
- Is against Little Saints Community Preschool Policies and Procedures.
- Falls below established standards of practise; or
- Amounts to improper conduct.

How to raise a concern

As a first step the concerns should be raised either verbally or in writing with the group's immediate supervisor/ manager. This may depend, however on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of malpractice. For example, if it is believed that management is involved with serious issues the staff member should immediately contact the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer), Hampshire Safeguarding Childrens Board & chairperson of the committee.

LADO – Mr Mark Blackwell, The Safeguarding Unit, Childrens Services Department, Clarendon House, Monarch Way. 01962 876364

Staff / volunteers who wish to make a written report are invited to use the following format:

- The background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);
- The reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

If a concern is raised immediately after it happens; the easier it becomes to take action. The whistle blower will not be expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, but will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern. It could be that the person noticing the issue may wish to consider discussing the concern with a colleague first or may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) people who have the same

experience or concerns. It is also possible to invite a professional representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns that have been raised.

Little Saints Community Preschool has in place a complaints procedure for further guidance as to what procedures to follow. This policy does NOT replace the complaints procedure.

Little Saints Community Preschool will respond to any concerns using the guidelines within this policy and the complaints policy and procedure. Little Saints Community Preschool hopes this will satisfy the relevant parties especially with regard to any action taken.

If the matter is taken outside Little Saints Community Preschool, it should be ensured that no confidential information is disclosed. Please check with our confidentiality policy for guidance.