



Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Statement

At Woodlands, we are committed to providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment where children are protected from harm. We encourage all employees, volunteers, students, apprentices, agency staff and trustees to raise genuine concerns about poor practice, safeguarding issues, misconduct or unlawful behaviour without fear of victimisation.

We recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount. Any concerns about the safety or welfare of children, or about the conduct of adults working with children, must be reported immediately.

Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Encourage staff to report concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide clear procedures for reporting concerns.
- Protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith.
- Ensure concerns are investigated appropriately.
- Promote an open and transparent safeguarding culture.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Students
- Apprentices
- Agency workers
- Contractors
- Committee members or trustees
- Anyone working on behalf of the setting

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of concerns relating to wrongdoing within the organisation that is in the public interest.

Examples include:

- Abuse or neglect of a child.
- Unsafe safeguarding practice.
- Failure to follow safeguarding procedures.
- Criminal activity.
- Fraud or theft.
- Health and safety risks.
- Serious breaches of EYFS requirements.
- Covering up wrongdoing.
- Bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- Behaviour that places children at risk.

Whistleblowing is different from raising a personal employment grievance.

Safeguarding Concerns

If the concern relates to a child being at risk of harm, staff must:

- Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- If the concern involves the DSL, report directly to the Chair of Trustees.
- If immediate action is required to protect a child, contact Children's Social Care or the Police without delay.

The safety of children must always take priority.

Raising a Concern

Staff should normally raise concerns with:

1. The Senior Manager/Registered Person/ Designated Safeguarding Lead
2. The Assistant Manager/ Designated Safeguarding Lead
3. The Chair of Trustees (if the concern involves management).

The concern should include:

- What happened.
- Date and time.
- Names of those involved.
- Any witnesses.
- Any evidence available.

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible.

Reporting Concerns Outside the Setting

If a member of staff believes their concern has not been taken seriously, or it involves senior management, they may contact:

Ofsted

- Telephone: 0300 123 1231
- Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- Telephone: 0300 123 2044
- Email on LADO@suffolk.gov.uk
- Online form – <https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/local-authority-designated-officers-lado>

Children's Social Care

- Customer First on **0808 800 4005**.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

- Telephone: 0800 028 0285
- Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Police

- 999 (Emergency)
- 101 (Non-Emergency)

Staff have the legal right to raise concerns directly with appropriate external agencies where necessary.

Protection for Whistleblowers

No individual who raises a genuine concern in good faith will suffer:

- Victimisation.
- Harassment.
- Bullying.
- Dismissal.

- Unfair treatment.

Deliberately false or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to keep the identity of the whistleblower confidential.

However, confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where:

- A child is at risk.
- The Police become involved.
- Legal proceedings require disclosure.

Investigation Process

Once a concern is raised:

1. It will be acknowledged promptly.
2. A risk assessment will be undertaken.
3. Appropriate safeguarding action will be taken where necessary.
4. An investigation will be carried out fairly.
5. Relevant agencies may be informed.
6. Outcomes will be recorded.

The whistleblower will normally receive feedback where appropriate, although confidentiality regarding others will be maintained.

Record Keeping

All whistleblowing concerns will be:

- Recorded in writing.
- Stored securely.
- Kept confidential.
- Retained in accordance with GDPR and data protection requirements.

Records will include:

- Date reported.
- Nature of concern.
- Actions taken.
- Outcome.
- Agencies involved.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees will:

- Promote a culture of openness.
- Ensure concerns are investigated.
- Ensure compliance with EYFS and safeguarding legislation.

Manager will:

- Take all concerns seriously.
- Respond promptly.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Escalate concerns appropriately.

All Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Manage safeguarding concerns.
- Refer to Children's Social Care where appropriate.
- Maintain safeguarding records.

Staff Must:

- Report concerns immediately.
- Cooperate with investigations.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Always act in the best interests of children.

Ofsted Notification Requirements

Under the EYFS, providers must notify Ofsted of any significant event that may affect the suitability of the provider or anyone caring for children, including allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person working or looking after children at the setting.

Notifications should be made as soon as reasonably practicable and, where required by the EYFS, within the relevant statutory timescales.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- Reviewed annually.
- Updated following legislative changes.
- Reviewed after any significant whistleblowing incident.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy