



Whistle Blowing

Playhouse Pre-school is committed to the highest possible standards and recognises that its staff members, students and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the setting. However, they may not express these concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with the Act and its commitment to the highest standards of service delivery, we actively encourage anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of our setting's practice or any adult's, volunteer or student's conduct to come forward and voice their concerns, in confidence, within the pre-school rather than overlooking the problem.

This whistle blowing procedure aims to help and protect both staff members and children. By following the procedure, you are acting to:

- Prevent a problem worsening,
- Safeguard children and young people, and
- Reduce the potential risks to others.

The earlier a concern is raised, the easier and sooner it is possible for Playhouse Pre-school to take action.

The word whistle blowing in this policy refers to the disclosure by staff members, students or volunteers of malpractice, either internally or externally, as well as illegal acts or omissions at work.

The aim of this policy and associated procedures is to establish an internal procedure that encourages and enables staff, students and volunteers to raise concerns about any aspect of the setting's practice, (which do not meet the criteria for being dealt with as a complaint or grievance), in confidence and without fear of reprisal.

Scope

Concerns that should be raised via this whistle blowing policy may be in relation to the actions/behaviours of other staff, students or volunteers, or about something that is perceived as:

- Unlawful – a criminal offence has been, is being or is likely to be committed
- Malpractice or ill treatment
- Repeated ill treatment despite a complaint being made
- Disregard for legislation and/or failure to comply with the setting's policies and procedures
- The environment has been, or is likely to be, damaged
- Showing undue favour over a contractual matter or to a job applicant
- A breach of the staff code of conduct



- Information on any of the above has been, is being, or is likely to be concealed
(*This list is not exhaustive*)

Principles

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All staff, students and volunteers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff, students and volunteers.
- We will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect anyone who raises a concern in good faith. Where such instances may occur this will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the setting's discipline and grievance procedure.
- We will do our best to protect a whistle blower's identity when a concern is raised and s/he does not want their name disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g. disciplinary procedure, they may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
- Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff, students and volunteers who raise concerns.
- Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.
- We will not tolerate malicious allegations and any such may be considered a disciplinary offence.

Procedure

This procedure is intended to supplement, rather than replace, the existing Complaints, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and should not be used inappropriately. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific policies and procedures, e.g. child protection, will normally be referred under its own procedures.

1. Staff, volunteers and students should raise concerns with Katie Hopkins. The concern can be shared verbally or in writing but they must ensure that they inform Katie Hopkins that they are following the whistle blowing procedure. Information should also be given on the background and history of the concerns, names, dates and places where possible and the reasons why they are concerned about the situation.
2. The action to be taken will depend upon the nature of the concern. All concerns raised (with the exception of allegations of abuse against a member of staff, or criminal or unlawful activity) will be investigated internally.



3. Katie Hopkins will make initial enquiries to determine whether the concern raised requires further investigation. Such initial enquiries will be dealt with promptly, thoroughly, impartially and confidentially in accordance with this procedure. The concern will be acknowledged in writing, within 10 days, and will indicate how the concern will/or has been dealt with. If it has not been dealt with then an indication of how long the procedure will take will be included.
4. In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries (usually involving a meeting with the individual raising the concern) will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that raise issues which fall within the scope of other policies/procedures, will be addressed under those procedures.
5. Employees are expected to co-operate fully with any investigation and disclose all relevant information. If other employees are willing/able to substantiate the concern and are aware of it but do not feel able to come forward, Katie Hopkins will encourage them to share their concerns. All meetings will be recorded in written format.
6. Depending on the nature of the concern, and the evidence found, possible outcomes of initial enquiries include:
 - Unable to investigate due to anonymous report and not enough information to proceed
 - If the concern is shared but is inaccurate no further investigation will be carried out
 - Where there is believed to be grounds for concern then further investigation will be carried out.
7. Where further investigations are required these will be carried out under the terms of strict confidentiality. This means not informing the subject of the complaint until (or if) it becomes necessary to do so. In certain cases, such as allegations of abuse, suspension from work may have to be considered immediately.
8. Care will be taken when carrying out the investigation to:
 - Protect the whistle blower concerned
 - Avoid alerting anyone about whom a concern has been raised
 - Avoid alerting other employees who may then warn the subject of the concern
 - Record all meetings as the record may be used in a formal hearing, if it is a serious complaint
 - Keep all records secure and confidential
9. If the result of the investigation is that there is a case to be answered by any individual the Disciplinary Procedure will be used.



10. If an employee raises a concern in good faith, but it is subsequently confirmed by the investigation to be untrue, no action will be taken. However, if the allegation is found to have been malicious or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against the employee

Allegations of abuse against adults in the setting

If an allegation of abuse is raised as a concern by another employee the setting's Allegations against staff policy will be implemented.

Policy updated: January 2022

Review date: January 2023