

## **Safeguarding**

### **Whistle Blowing**

#### **Policy statement**

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their place of work. However, they may not express their growing concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just suspicion of malpractice and wrongdoing at work.

Mr Bee's Family Centre is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty, and accountability. This policy document makes it clear that employees, parents/carers, and others can do so without fear of reprisals. The whistle blowing procedure allows all people who are connected to Mr Bee's, including outside agencies, to raise concerns about the conduct of any Trustee, Employee, Student or Volunteer at Mr Bee's Family Centre.

#### **AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY**

This policy aims to:

- Provide avenues for you to raise genuine concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- Allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome or response;
- Reassure you that steps will be taken to protect you from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

Existing policies are in place:

- to lodge a grievance relating to the staff's own employment (refer to Grievance).
- for parent/carer concerns or complaints (refer to Making a Complaint).
- Allegations of Abuse against an adult within the setting or concerns about a child (refer to Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on our website and safeguarding posters located in parent areas at Mr Bee's).

Whistle blowing is the term used to describe the disclosure of information about suspected wrongdoing or dangers identified at work. Whistle blowing is a mechanism where staff or volunteers can voice their concerns, without fear of repercussion in circumstances where their concerns have not been dealt with, or they do not feel able to follow usual reporting lines for some reason. Certain types of wrongdoing or dangers that are reported are regarded as being in the public interest. These are specified by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 and Employment Rights Act 1996.

This Whistle blowing policy is intended to cover genuine concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. That concern may be about something that:

- Is against the policies and procedures of Mr Bee's Family Centre;
- Falls below established standards of practice;
- Amounts to improper conduct;
- Is a health and safety risk, including risks to the public as well as children, other colleagues, parents/carers, and others;
- Contradicts Mr Bee's Family Centre's Codes of Conduct.
- Contributes to a safeguarding risk involving children in the care of Mr. Bee's Family Centre.

The procedure for whistle blowing will be communicated to all employees as well as parents/carers, students, and others during the induction process.

## **HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION**

Mr Bee's Family Centre recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to take, not least because of the fear of reprisal. Mr Bee's Family Centre will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. However, should you feel that you have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly because of raising a concern, you should refer to the procedures outlined in the Grievance policy.

This does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, those procedures will be halted because of your whistle blowing. This applies to parents/carers of the Centre who, **after whistleblowing**, decide to seek alternative childcare.

**All whistleblowers are given the same protection, so you must not threaten or otherwise badly treat others who have raised concerns under this policy. If you do, you may face disciplinary action which could include dismissal for gross misconduct. The whistleblower may also be able to bring legal action against you.**

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Mr Bee's Family Centre will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern. However, it must be appreciated that, in the interests of natural justice, any legal investigation may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

## ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

You are strongly encouraged to put your name to any allegation in order that a thorough investigation may take place. Anonymous allegations will be investigated, and action taken to the point where the whistle blower remains anonymous. In exercising the whistle blower anonymity, the following factors will be considered when considering how to deal with any allegations:

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

After considering the points above, in line with the **Confidentiality, recording, information sharing and Client Access to records** policy, it may be necessary to share the name of the whistle blower (i.e., safeguarding, and disciplinary action). If allegations are in good faith, the whistle blower will face no repercussions.

## MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. **Most concerns are raised with good intentions, but occasionally someone makes a false allegation out of malice or because they believe they have something to gain. Anyone found doing this will face action under our Disciplinary policy and is at risk of being dismissed for gross misconduct.**

## HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN?

Whistle blowers are encouraged to take the followings steps to raise a concern:

- Firstly, raise your concern with your immediate line manager (Centre Lead Manager/Supervisor). If you feel your concern with your line manager causes a conflict of interest, you should approach their line manager or another senior management staff member.
- You will be asked to put your concerns in writing, including any evidence which substantiates your concern, **key facts, dates, and the name of the people involved**– this can be done anonymously if preferred.

- You will be invited to a meeting to discuss your concerns, and you are entitled to be accompanied at this and any subsequent meetings by a colleague or trade union representative. If you bring a companion, we ask that you both agree to keep your disclosures confidential before and after the meeting and during any investigation that may follow.
- After the initial meeting, we will investigate your concerns, and we may ask you to attend further meetings. To investigate properly, we may involve specialists with particular knowledge or experience of the issues you have raised.
- Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether a **full** investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g., safeguarding or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- **Where an investigation is appropriate**, the person contacted will begin initial investigations seeking support from the Senior Early Years Professional if appropriate, or external agency as outlined in paragraph below **‘EXTERNAL AGENCIES.’**
- We will keep you informed about how our investigation is progressing and how long it is likely to take. We may not be able to give you details about the investigation (or any action it leads to) as we need to protect confidentiality and comply with legal obligations. We understand this may be frustrating, and so we will do our best to reassure you that things are in hand and to explain why we are acting the way we are.
- The whistleblower will be addressed fairly, but we cannot guarantee the outcome of our investigations will be the one wanted.
- If the whistle blower wishes to appeal any decision made this can be done by following the procedures outlined in Mr Bee’s Appeal policy.

## **SAFEGUARDING:**

Safeguarding issues which involve a member of staff should initially be reported directly to the centre Safeguarding Lead Practitioner. If you suspect there may be conflict of interest in reporting to your centre SLP you should report to the deputy SLP at your centre, the Senior Early Years Professional or the nominated Trustee whose contact numbers are shown below, all of whom will be SLP trained. If you have not been able to report to a nominated SLP as previously mentioned, follow the guidance on the ‘Allegations against an adult in a childcare setting’ flow chart, located in each centre’s office and staff room.

The earlier you express your concern, the easier it is for Mr Bee’s Family Centre, OFSTED, Children’s Services or LADO to act.

## EXTERNAL AGENCIES

The action taken by Mr Bee's Family Centre will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may (in no particular order) be one or more of the following ways:

- Be investigated by OFSTED
- Be referred to the Police;
- Be referred to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or The Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS).

Allegations referred directly to the CADS or LADO will be dealt with in accordance with their policies and procedures. Any person who is the subject of an allegation should, at the appropriate time, be given details of the allegation in order to respond.

## HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER?

If the concern has not been dealt with in a manner which is satisfactory to the employee, volunteer, student, parent/carer, or others involved, is able to make a complaint directly to OFSTED if childcare related or follow the Appeal policy if employment related.

If a staff member or volunteer decides to whistle blow to a prescribed person rather than our organisation, they must make sure that they have chosen the correct person or body for the issue – refer to the useful contact list on the next page.

### Legal framework:

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Children Act (1989 s47)

Employment Rights Act 1996

Employment Rights Act 2010

Employment Rights Bill 2024

### Linked Policies:

Grievance

Appeal

Making a Complaint

Confidentiality, recording, information sharing and Client Access to records

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Conflict of Interest

## Useful Contacts for Whistle Blowing:

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Telephone Number:</b>
<b>Centre Lead / SLPs North Lynn:</b>	Lisa Webster Deputy: Rebecca Ford	01553-777097
<b>Centre Lead / SLPs Springwood:</b>	Matthew Foulkes Deputy: Sophie Bailey	01553-766661
<b>Centre Lead/SLPs St. Augustine's:</b>	Jess Smith Deputy: <b>Sharlie Kirk</b>	01553-816907
<b>Senior Early Years Professional:</b>	Karen Gibbons	01553-816904
<b>Chair of Trustees:</b>	Jeanette Nowrung	01553-770439
<b>Children's Advice and Duty Services (CADS):</b>	Consultant Social Worker	0344 800 8021
<b>LADO:</b>	How to make a referral can be found at:	<a href="#">How to Raise a Concern   Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership   PWWC (norfolklscp.org.uk)</a>
	Or an email sent to	<a href="mailto:lado@norfolk.gov.uk">lado@norfolk.gov.uk</a>
<b>Ofsted:</b>	Contact them about matters relating to regulation and inspection of children's social care.	Tel: 0300 123 3155 Email: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a>
<b>The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)</b>	Contact them about matters relating to child welfare and protection.	
	This phonenumber is staffed 365 days a year:	0800 028 0285
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mon-Fri (incl. bank holidays) 8am to 10pm</li> <li>• Weekends 9am to 6pm</li> </ul>	
	Email:	<a href="mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk">help@nspcc.org.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/">www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/</a>

## Re: Whistle Blowing

This policy was reviewed at a meeting of:

Mr. Bee's Family Centre

Held on:

29<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Date to be reviewed:

May 2028

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees:	
Name of role of signatory:	Jeanette Nowrung, Chairperson
Signed by Senior Early Years Professional:	
Individual Centre Lead's Signature:	
North Lynn:	
Springwood:	
St Augustine's:	