

Staff Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure



Grass Roots Nursery Group: Whistleblowing

Purpose This policy outlines procedures for reporting suspected wrongdoing at Grass Roots Nursery Group, ensuring the safety and well-being of children. It aims to foster a culture of open communication where staff feel safe to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing that may put children at risk. This includes:

- **Unsafe practices:** Actions that harm a child's safety or well-being.
- **Breach of policy:** Violations of group procedures.
- **Improper conduct:** Unethical behaviour by staff.
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide proper care.

1. Internal Reporting Procedure

We encourage employees, volunteers, and students to raise concerns internally first to address issues quickly.

- **Step 1: Primary Contact** Report concerns to the Nursery Manager, **Caitlin Bray**.
- **Step 2: If the Manager is involved, report** directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), **Emma Ford**, or the Nursery Proprietor **Lucy Pottinger**.
- **Step 3: If the DSL/Proprietor is involved** Proceed directly to the external reporting routes listed in Section 3.

How to report: Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing (email/letter). Provide as much detail as possible, including names, dates, and the nature of the concern. You do not need proof, but you must have a reasonable belief that the concern is genuine and made in the public interest.

What happens next:

1. The recipient will record the disclosure and ask you to confirm its accuracy.
2. You will receive an acknowledgment within **10 working days**.
3. **Safeguarding concerns** will be referred to the Calderdale LADO within **one working day**.
4. **Other concerns** (e.g., fraud) will trigger a formal internal investigation.

3. External Reporting Routes

If internal reporting is inappropriate or the matter remains unaddressed, you may contact:

- **Calderdale LADO (Primary External Contact):** For allegations against adults working with children.
 - **Phone:** 01422 394055 / 07596 888147
 - **Email:** ladoadmin@calderdale.gov.uk
- **Ofsted: * Whistleblowing Hotline:** 0300 1233155 (Mon–Fri, 8am–6pm)

- **Email:** whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:**
 - **Phone:** 0800 0280285
 - **Email:** help@nspcc.org.uk

4. Protections and Support

- **Confidentiality:** We will treat all concerns confidentially to the best of our ability, subject to legal requirements for child protection.
- **Legal Protection:** Reporting concerns in good faith is protected by law. No action will be taken against you if the concern is not confirmed by investigation.
- **Victimisation:** We will take action against any colleague who retaliates against a whistleblower.
- **Malicious Allegations:** Knowingly false or malicious allegations may lead to disciplinary action.

Important Note: This policy is for public interest disclosures and is not intended for general workplace grievances.

Appendix A

Procedure for Raising a Concern (Whistleblowing)

1. Internal Reporting

We encourage all employees, volunteers, students, and contractors to first raise any concerns internally. This allows us to address issues quickly and effectively.

- **First point of contact:** Concerns should be reported to the Nursery Manager Caitlin Bray.
- **If the concern involves the Nursery Manager:** The concern should be reported directly to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Emma Ford** or the **Nursery Proprietor/Owner Lucy Pottinger**.
- **If the concern involves the DSL or Proprietor/Owner:** Please proceed directly to the external reporting routes listed below.

How to raise a concern internally:

- Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing (e.g., email or a confidential letter).
- Your concern should include as much detail as possible, such as:
 - The nature of the concern.
 - Names, dates, and places involved.
 - Reasons why you believe the situation is a concern.
- You are not required to have proof of wrongdoing, but you must have a reasonable belief that the concern is genuine and made in the public interest.

What happens after a concern is raised internally?

1. The person receiving the concern will listen carefully and make a written record of the disclosure. You will be asked to confirm its accuracy.
2. The concern will be treated with the utmost seriousness and confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those who need to know to facilitate a proper investigation.
3. An initial assessment will be made to determine the nature of the concern.
 - **For safeguarding concerns (e.g., an allegation against a member of staff):** The procedure will immediately move to a multi-agency response, which will include a referral to the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** for Calderdale. The LADO is a key point of contact for all allegations against adults who work with children.
 - **For other concerns (e.g., fraud, health and safety):** A formal investigation will be initiated, led by the Nursery Manager or Proprietor/Owner.
4. You will receive an acknowledgment of your concern within 10 working days. We will provide an estimated timeline for the investigation and keep you informed of the progress and outcome, where appropriate and without breaching the confidentiality of others.
5. No action will be taken against a person who makes a disclosure in good faith, even if the concern is not confirmed by the investigation. However, malicious or knowingly false allegations will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

2. External Reporting

If you feel your concerns have not been addressed appropriately internally, or if it is not appropriate to raise the concern internally (e.g., it involves the DSL or senior leadership), you may report your concerns to an external body.

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Calderdale Council:** This is the primary external contact for any concerns or allegations about an adult who works with children.
 - Calderdale LADO: 01422 394055/07596 888147 and email: ladoadmin@calderdale.gov.uk
- **Ofsted:** The regulatory body for nurseries. Ofsted has a specific whistleblowing process.
 - OFSTED Telephone: Whistleblowing Hotline (0300 1233155). It is staffed from 8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday.
Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Post: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.
Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a childcare provider:
Complaints procedure - Ofsted - GOV.UK
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** Provides confidential advice and support.
 - **Phone:** 0800 028 0285
 - **Email:** help@nspcc.org.uk
- **The Police:** If you believe a criminal offence has been committed.

3. Protection for Whistleblowers

This policy is designed to protect those who raise genuine concerns in the public interest. We will take appropriate action against any colleague who victimises or retaliates against a whistleblower.