

Whistle Blowing Policy

This policy applies to all employees of Little Cygnets Childcare Ltd. It is crucial to our business that any fraud, misconduct, or wrongdoing by employees is reported and properly addressed. Little Cygnets encourages all individuals to raise any concerns they may have about the conduct of others or the way the business is run. This policy outlines the procedure employees should follow if they have concerns and explains how those concerns will be addressed.

Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. These are called “qualifying disclosures.”

A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith by an employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence
- A miscarriage of justice
- An act creating a risk to health and safety
- A breach of any other legal obligation
- Concealment of any of the above

...is being, has been, or is likely to be committed.

It is not necessary for the employee to have proof that such an act is occurring—a reasonable belief is sufficient. Employees are not responsible for investigating the matter; the organisation will ensure that an investigation takes place.

An employee who makes a protected disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to detriment, or victimised for raising the concern.



Employees are encouraged to raise their concerns under this procedure. If unsure whether to raise a concern, they should discuss the issue with their manager.

Principles

- All employees should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work.
- Employees should report any illegal or unethical conduct they become aware of.
- Any matter raised will be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and confidentially, and the outcome will be reported back to the employee who raised the concern.
- Employees will not be victimised for raising a concern. Employment, future progression, or training opportunities will not be affected by raising a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of a worker for raising a qualifying disclosure is a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered during any investigation, the Little Cygnets disciplinary procedure will be followed, alongside any appropriate external measures.
- Any instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. Employees told not to raise a concern should report this immediately to the manager.

Procedure

This procedure applies to disclosures about matters other than a breach of an employee's own contract of employment. Employees concerned about their own contract should use the grievance procedure found in the Staff Handbook.

Stage 1 – Line Manager

- Employees should raise concerns with their line manager unless they reasonably believe the manager is involved or for any reason do not wish to approach the manager.
- The line manager will arrange an investigation, either personally or by passing the issue to a more senior person.

- Investigations may involve written statements from the employee and others involved.
- The investigation will follow the principles outlined above.
- The line manager or investigator will report findings to the owners, who will take necessary action, including reporting to relevant government departments or regulatory agencies.
- If disciplinary action is required, the HR department will be involved, and the disciplinary procedure will be initiated.
- Upon conclusion, the employee will be informed of the investigation outcome and any actions taken. If no action is taken, a full explanation will be provided.

Stage 2 – Escalation to Owners

- If the employee believes the line manager is involved, has not properly investigated, or has failed to report the outcome, the employee should contact one of the owners.
- The owner will arrange for another senior staff member to review the investigation, make any necessary enquiries, and report to the owners.
- If the employee does not wish to approach their line manager for any reason, they should also contact the owner directly.

Stage 3 – Reporting to External Authorities

- If, after stages 1 and 2, the employee reasonably believes appropriate action has not been taken, they may report the matter to the proper authority.
- Qualifying disclosures may be made to bodies such as:
 - HM Revenue & Customs
 - The Financial Services Authority (FSA)
 - Office of Fair Trading

- Health & Safety Executive
- Environment Agency
- Ofsted
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline (for child protection concerns)
- North Tyneside Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Contact Information

Ofsted:

- Phone (Whistle Blowing Hotline): 0300 123 3155
- Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- Address: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
- [Ofsted Contact Page](#)

NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline:

- Phone: 0800 028 0285
- Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
- Website: [NSPCC Whistleblowing](#)

North Tyneside Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):

- Name: Hayley Muir
- Address: Quadrant East, Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
- Phone: 0345 2000 109



- Email: lado@northtyneside.gov.uk
- North Tyneside LADO Information

Little Cygnets Childcare Ltd is committed to ensuring a safe, ethical, and transparent workplace. All employees are encouraged to speak up about concerns without fear of reprisal.

Signed (Jessica Burns): *Jessica Burns*

Signed (Scott Marshall): *Scott Marshall*

Review Date: September 26