



Whistle-Blowing Policy

Members of staff may be the first to spot anything that is seriously wrong within the setting. However, they might not say anything because they think this would be disloyal, or they might be worried that their suspicions are not justified. They may also be worried that they or someone else may be victimised.

Members of the public (for example, parents of students) may also share some of these concerns. That is why we have produced this whistle-blowing policy to help staff and the public to contact us with their concerns.

We are committed to being open, honest and accountable. The Committee wants anyone who has serious concerns about any aspect of our setting to raise those concerns.

This policy aims to make sure that if you want to raise any concern, you can do so with confidence and without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

What Types of Action Are Covered by The Policy?

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings such as the following: -

- Fraud or corruption.
- Children or students being mistreated.
- Unauthorised use of public money.
- An unlawful act.
- Any danger to health and safety.
- The environment being damaged (for example, by pollution).
- A person abusing their position or any unauthorised use or for personal gain.
- A person deliberately not adhering to a Dandelions policy, an official code of practice, any law or regulation, or any procedures agreed by the Committee.
- A person failing to meet appropriate professional standards.
- A person being discriminated against because of their age, sex, race, social group, religion, belief, family background, pregnancy, maternity, marriage, civil partnership, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability.

This policy applies to all staff working in Dandelions, as well as contractors working on the premises (for example, agency staff, builders and drivers). It also covers suppliers and people who provide services to the setting.

These procedures build upon our complaints procedure and the Managers are responsible for making all relevant people aware of these procedures.

What Is Not Covered?

You cannot use this policy to deal with serious or sensitive matters that are covered by other procedures. Such procedures include the following: -

- Staff's complaints about their employment. These complaints are dealt with through Dandelions Grievance Procedure.
- Customers' complaints about our services. These complaints are dealt with through Dandelions Complaints Procedure. Also, you cannot use this policy to raise issues that have already been settled through other procedures.

Protecting You

If your allegation is true, you have nothing to fear. But we understand that deciding to blow the whistle is not easy.

If you raise a concern which you believe is true, we will take appropriate action under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 to protect you from any harassment, victimisation or bullying.

We will keep your concerns confidential if this is what you want. In this case we will not reveal your name or position without your permission or unless we have to do so by law. We would explain this at the time you raise a concern, so you can decide whether or not to proceed.

Anonymous Allegations

Because we will protect you (as explained above), we encourage you to give your name when you make an allegation. Concerns raised anonymously tend to be far less effective and if, for example, we do not have enough information, we may not be able to investigate the matter at all.

If you feel that you cannot give your name, the Committee will decide whether or not to consider the matter. This will depend on: -

- the seriousness of the matter;
- whether your concern is believable; and
- whether we can carry out an investigation based on the information you have provided.

Untrue Allegations

If you make an allegation which you believe is true, but it is not confirmed by our investigation, we will not take any action against you.

However, if you make an allegation which you know is untrue, we will take appropriate disciplinary or legal action against you.

How to Raise A Concern

Inform the Manager or the Deputy immediately if you have any concerns that fall within the scope of this framework.

If you believe senior staff are involved in the matter of concern, you should approach the Committee.

You should put your concern(s) in writing although they may be raised verbally. The detail you provide should include background and history of the concern (giving relevant names, dates and places) and the reason(s) why you are particularly concerned.

You are not expected to prove beyond doubt about the truth of the allegation, but you do need to demonstrate to the person you contact that there are sufficient grounds for your concern and that you are therefore raising the concern in good faith.

What the Response Will Be

The person you notify of your concern will ensure that it is taken seriously and that they act swiftly to tackle any wrongdoing.

An initial investigation will be carried out to decide whether a full investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

If an investigation is required, a decision will be made as to whether the matter will be addressed internally, be referred to the police or an external auditor or form the subject of an independent inquiry.

You will receive in writing an acknowledgement that the concern has been raised, how it is proposed to deal with the matter and an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response. If the decision is that no investigation is to take place, the full reasons for this will be given to you.

If appropriate, you will be asked to attend a meeting to provide further information.

Safeguards

It is recognised that a decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. The Committee will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action in order to protect you if you raise a concern in good faith.

As far as possible your identity will be kept confidential if you do not want your name disclosed. However, it must be appreciated that an investigation process may reveal the source of the information and any written documentation you provide may be required as evidence.

If you raise a concern anonymously it will be considered at the discretion of the Committee and further action will depend on the likelihood of obtaining relevant information, the

seriousness of the issues raised and the specific nature of the complaint. You also have to bear in mind that if you do raise a complaint anonymously it will not be possible to provide a response.

Taking the Matter Further

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the expectation is that you will raise your concern(s) with your Manager or the Committee.

If, however, you are not satisfied with the action taken and feel that it is right to take the matter outside the setting, there are several further possible contact points (which can be seen at the link below).

If you do raise the matter outside the setting, you do need to ensure as far as possible, that the concern is raised without divulging confidential information. The person that you contact should be able to advise you further on this.

Contact Points Outside Dandelions

Dandelions has a duty to contact Children's Social Care (CSC) on 01202 228866. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is Patrick Crawford and can be contacted on 01305 221122.

Further information can be found in the Pan-Dorset Multi-Agency Safeguarding Policies and Procedures Manual at: -

http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_whistleblowing.html

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