



Whistleblowing (Raising Concerns) Policy

*At Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school, we are committed to **maintaining a safe, transparent, and open environment** where staff members, parents and Trustee members **feel empowered to raise concerns** without fear of reprisal. This policy ensures that all **concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures** are taken seriously and **addressed promptly** to uphold the highest standards of care and safety for children.*

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) are Roxanne Speede and Linda McLellan

Definition of Whistle Blowing

The term Whistle blowing is used for an employee raising concerns about practices and procedures in their workplace, without fear of repercussions. We have an appropriate whistleblowing procedure in place and all staff should report any concerns in good faith, regarding inappropriate behaviour or actions of colleagues.

Whistle-blowing refers to the act of raising concerns about suspected misconduct, malpractice, risks, or violations of policies within a childcare setting. This includes:

- Concerns about safeguarding practices
- Reports of staff misconduct
- Breaches of policies and procedures
- Breaches of confidentiality
- Health and safety failures
- Fraud, theft or misuse of funds
- Any actions that could put a child at risk
- Behaviour that endangers children or staff

Clear Procedures for Reporting Concerns

We have a clear and well-defined process for reporting concerns to ensure a safe and supportive environment for whistle-blowers.

If a staff member or parent/carer have any concerns that fall within our Whistleblowing policy, they are to report them directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. Should the concern involve the DSL, they are advised to contact the trustee team, preferably addressing the concern to the Chairperson, to ensure appropriate action is taken.

- **Step 1: Raising a Concern**
 - Staff can report concerns in confidence to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), trustee team or LADO.
 - Concerns can be made verbally or in writing, however, should include specific details such as dates, times, individuals involved, and any supporting evidence.
- **Step 2: Confidential Investigation**

- All reports will be investigated promptly and thoroughly while maintaining confidentiality.
- The individual raising the concern will not face retaliation or discrimination for making a report in good faith.
- **Step 3: Outcome and Action**
 - If misconduct is found, appropriate action will be taken, such as staff training, policy reviews, disciplinary action, or referrals to external authorities.
 - The whistle-blower will be informed of the outcome where possible while respecting confidentiality laws.
- **Step 4: Right to Appeal**
 - If the whistle-blower is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the concern to a higher authority (dependant on whom their concern was initially raised to) such as Ofsted, the NSPCC or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- **Ofsted whistleblowing hotline** 0300 123 3155
- **NSPCC whistle blowing advice line** 0800 028 0285

LADO Referral Process

- The DSL or Whistleblower can make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) via the LADO referral form on the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) website. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/information-for-childcare-providers/providers/child-protection-and-lado-procedure.aspx#>
- Referral form - <https://pn11-word-view.officeapps.live.com/wv/WordViewer/request.pdf?WOPIsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fpn11%2Dview%2Dwopi%2Ewopi%2Eonline%2Eoffice%2Enet%3A810%2Foh%2Fwopi%2Ffiles%2F%40%2FwFileId%3FwFileId%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww%252Ehertfordshire%252Egov%252Euk%253A443%252Fdoc%252Fchild%252Fprofs%252F5%252E1%252E5%252Dlado%252Dreferral%252Dform%252Dmarch%252D23%252Daccessible%252Edocx&&z=fceb8ab6be74de77b71cd4037bce96cc9c3fbf4be309a22062e62791f25acf94&type=printpdf&useNamedAction=1&usid=b4b1e3a9-8a51-4110-8634-4c697002555c&build=20251114.7&waccluster=PNL1>
Referral form will be emailed directly to lado.referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- Complete cooperation with all external safeguarding investigations will be maintained.

HSCP LADO Threshold

Refer to Hertfordshire's 'Dealing with Allegations against Adults that work with Children' Lado Threshold document, July 2018. Hard copy located within our Safeguarding folder. https://best-start-herts.tfemagazine.co.uk/assets/1/lado_threshold_document.pdf

Confidentiality and Protection for Whistle-Blowers

- All reports will be handled with confidentiality to protect those raising concerns.
- Staff, parents, and Trustees are encouraged to provide their name when reporting concerns to allow for follow-up, but anonymous reports will still be investigated.
- No staff member will face disciplinary action or retaliation for reporting concerns in good faith.

Creating a Supportive Environment

- Our setting promotes a culture where raising concerns is encouraged and seen as a positive step toward safeguarding.
- Staff receive training on whistle-blowing procedures and how to report concerns.

False or Malicious Reports

- Whistle-blowing should always be done in good faith.
- Deliberate false or malicious reports will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if required, to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with any changes in legislation or local guidelines. Feedback from staff, parents, and Trustees will be welcomed to continuously improve our whistle-blowing procedures.

Alignment with EYFS 2025 Changes

This policy has been updated in line with the September 2025 EYFS reforms, which introduce enhanced safeguarding measures. The EYFS 2025 framework emphasises:

- **Stronger whistle-blowing procedures** to ensure all concerns are taken seriously.
- **Increased protection for staff** raising concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures.
- **A clearer, more structured reporting process** to address issues **promptly and thoroughly**.
- **A supportive and transparent culture** where staff **feel confident to speak up** without fear of retaliation.

This policy was adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2025