

Whistle Blowing Policy

Introduction

Bunnahone Bunnies Cross Community Playgroup are committed to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability. We encourage staff and others working with us to raise any concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice those concerns. In some instances, concerns may need to be expressed on a confidential basis.

Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior leadership and/or relevant agencies. This procedure encourages staff to raise serious concerns, without fear of reprisal or victimisation, rather than overlooking a problem or raising the matter outside. It applies to all staff and volunteers working on the premises. It is recognised that whistle blowing may engender feelings of disloyalty to colleagues or that staff may fear harassment or victimisation. Their feelings, however natural, must never result in the behavior that is causing concern, continuing.

Do not think “what if I am wrong - think what if I am right”?

Other Complaints Procedures

Child Protection issues should be reported according to the specific guidelines laid out in that policy. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice under this procedure will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that already affects an individual.

Behaviour that should cause concern: -

- conduct which is, has been or is likely to be an offence or breach of law
- conduct that has occurred, is occurring or is likely occur the result of which the playschool or fails to comply with a legal obligation. For example, unauthorised use of public funds, possible fraud and corruption, verbal, sexual or physical abuse, or other unethical conduct discrimination of any kind and waste/frivolous expenditure
- disclosures related past, current, or likely miscarriages of justice
- past, current, or likely health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- past, current, or likely damage to the environment

Reasons for whistleblowing

- Everyone has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

What stops people from whistleblowing

- Starting a chain of events which spirals.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions, or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can with the playschool leader or chairperson. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response - do not let matters rest.
- Ideally you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates, and places where you can.
- A member of staff is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your employer has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

Confidentiality

All concerns raised will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity if this is your wish. However, in certain cases, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality if you are required to come forward as a witness.

Anonymous Allegations

Whenever possible you should put your name to your allegation as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful than those that are attributed to a named individual. However anonymous allegations will be considered and investigated at the playschool's discretion. In exercising the discretion, the factors to be considered include:

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

Self-reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with the Leader so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned. Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Further advice, support and contact details

It is recognised that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support are available from the Leader or Chairperson.

Member of staff
with
Concern

Cora Murphy
Chairperson
07533083900

Early Years Advisor
Donna Sweeney
07714842433

Social
Services
Linda Long
02866327734

PSNI
999

All written
reports
Will be kept in a locked
cabinet and may be used
as evidence in court