**Whistle Blowing Policy**

The whistle blowing procedure aims to help and protect both staff and children. By following the procedure, you are acting to:

* Prevent a problem getting worse
* Safeguard children and young people.
* Reduce the potential of risks to others.

The earlier you raise a concern the easier and sooner it is possible for the setting to act.

**Introduction**

Burford Preschool CIC is committed to the highest possible standards and recognises that it’s staff, students and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the setting. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or they may fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be suspicion of malpractice.

The **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** protects workers who raise concerns from victimisation or harassment. In accordance with that act and its commitment to the highest standards of service delivery, Burford Preschool CIC actively encourages its workers with serious concerns about any aspect of the settings practice or any adults, volunteer, or student’s conduct to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within the setting rather than overlooking a problem.

**Objective**

The aim of this policy and associated procedures is to establish an internal procedure that will encourage and enable staff, students, and volunteers to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the setting practice in confidence and without fear of reprisals. The aim is to ensure that the setting continues to work within best practice and safeguard children and young people.

Concerns that should be raised via the Whistle Blowing Policy may be in relation to the actions / behaviour of other staff, students, or volunteers, or about something that is perceived as:

* A criminal offence
* The breach of a legal obligation
* A miscarriage of justice
* A danger to the health and safety of any individual
* Malpractice
* Fraud
* Failing to comply with the settings policy and procedures
* Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
* Attempts to suppress or conceal any information relating to any of the above

**Principles**

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

* All staff, volunteers and students have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
* The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff, students, and volunteers.
* Burford Preschool CIC will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.
* Burford Preschool CIC will do its best to protect a Whistle Blowers identity when a concern is raised and does not want their name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g., disciplinary procedure, the worker may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
* In some circumstances Burford Preschool CIC may have to disclose the identity of the worker without their consent, although this will be discussed with the worker first.
* Appropriate advice and support will be made available to staff, students and volunteers who raise concerns.
* Those who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.
* Burford Preschool CIC will not tolerate malicious allegations which may be considered a disciplinary offence.

**Procedures**

Procedures for reporting and investigating ‘whistle blowing’ concerns have been developed to ensure that:

* Staff or volunteers can raise concerns (no matter how small they may appear) internally as a matter of course and receive feedback on any action taken.
* Concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and appropriately.
* Staff and volunteers are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.
* Staff and volunteers can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the setting response and seek external advice and guidance (see useful contacts).
* Issues raised are addressed via other procedures and policies as appropriate e.g., safeguarding policy, health and safety, etc.
* Appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

**Raising a concern**

Staff should raise concerns with the manager if it is about the manager then concerns should be raised with Neville Ward, Service Manager, Early Years and Childcare, Shropshire. Neville.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

Concerns should be raised in writing and include:

* Reference to the fact that it is a whistle blowing disclosure.
* The background and history of the concerns.
* Names, dates and places (where possible).
* The reasons why the worker is concerned about the situation.

Staff who feel unable to put concerns in writing can telephone or meet either the manager or speak to Neville Ward on **01743 254552**.

**Investigation**

The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern. All matters raised (except for allegations of abuse against a staff member or a criminal or unlawful activity) will be investigated internally.

The appropriate person/s will investigate the concerns thoroughly ensuring that a written response can be provided within ten working days.

The response should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation and whom to contact should the worker be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter.

If the investigation cannot be completed with the time scale above, the worker should receive a response that indicates:

* Progress to date.
* How the matter is being dealt with
* How long it will take to provide a final response

To protect individuals, initial enquires (usually involving a meeting with the individual raising the concerns) will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that raise issues that fall within the scope of other policies / procedures will be addressed under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved at this initial stage simply by agreed action or an explanation regarding the concern, without the need for further investigation.

If you do not feel the complaint has been dealt with effectively or you still have concerns, you have a right to refer your concern to Ofsted.

**Other Useful Contacts**

Staff have access to **Croner Employment Law, Health and Safety and HR services, via my healthy advantage app** which can be used for Whistle Blowing and advice on employment procedures.

Beverly Jones (LA Early Years Co-ordinator) **01743 254454**

**Ofsted Whistle Blowing Hotline** **whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk** **08000724725**

Every member of Staff has a copy of the Whistle Blowing Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by all staff.