

Peter Pan Playgroup Whistleblowing Policy

Peter Pan Playgroup is committed to the highest possible standards and recognises that staff, volunteers and students may realise that there may be something wrong within the Playgroup. Our aim is to establish an internal procedure which encourages and enables staff, volunteers and students to raise serious concerns about any aspect of the Playgroup's practice (and which do not meet the criteria for being dealt with as a complaint or grievance) in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that the Playgroup continues to work within best practice and safeguard children.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who 'blow the whistle' about wrongdoing. It applies where a worker has a reasonable belief that their disclosure tends to show one more of the following offences or breaches:

- A criminal offence.
- The breach of a legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual.
- Damage to the environment.
- Deliberate covering up of information tending to show any of the above.

Peter Pan Playgroup supports measures which protect whistleblowers from any form of victimisation or harassment. The following procedure aims to ensure that concerns are dealt with effectively and efficiently, and the Playgroup will do all that they can to preserve the confidentiality of staff who raise such concerns.

Procedures

- Staff, volunteers and students who genuinely believe that the people they work with are behaving in a way that seems wrong or have a serious concern about unacceptable practice, will be doing their duty and acting in the public interest by speaking out.
- Individuals should raise their concerns with the Manager/Supervisor or Chairperson of the Management Committee or if this is not possible, the local authority. Concerns should be raised in writing and include reference to the fact that it is a whistleblowing disclosure, the background and history of the concerns, names, dates and places (where possible), the reasons why the individual is concerned about the situation. Where individuals feel unable to put their concerns in writing, then they can telephone or meet either the Manager/Supervisor or Chairperson or other designated committee member.
- Although a member of staff is not expected to prove the absolute truth of the allegation, they will need to demonstrate that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- The Playgroup understands that, depending upon the sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of wrongdoing, it may not be possible to approach those directly involved with the setting.
- The Playgroup will respond to any concerns raised and deal with quickly and appropriately. In order to protect a member of staff who raises a concern and those accused of wrongdoing, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Reassurance will be given to individuals who 'whistleblow' in good faith, that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation.
- Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.
- Staff members/volunteers will be told how the Playgroup intends to deal with a concern within 10 working days of the concern being brought to the Playgroup's attention. The action taken will depend on the nature of the concern and all matters raised (with the exception of allegations of abuse against a staff member/volunteer, or criminal or unlawful activity) will be investigated internally.

- A written response will be given and should include details of how the matter was investigated, conclusions drawn from the investigation, and whom to contact should the staff member/volunteer be unhappy with the response and wish to raise the matter further. If the investigation cannot be completed within the above timescale, the individual should receive a response indicating the progress to date, how the matter is being dealt with, and how long it will take to provide a final response.
- All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the staff member/volunteer's identity if they so wish. However, whilst making all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the matter, at a certain stage in the investigation it will be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons stated in the concern. All concerns raised will be assessed to determine if the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant, and there would have to be a substantial reason for doing so. Complainants should however be aware that their identity may be revealed by inference.
- Staff members/volunteers can take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the Playgroup's response and seek external advice and guidance. If they still have concerns or do not feel that the complaint has been dealt with effectively, other channels are open to them:

NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH.

Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a childcare provider: Complaints Procedure – Ofsted – GOV.UK – (www.gov.uk).

- The Playgroup accepts that deciding to report a concern can be very difficult. If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her. If a member of staff makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: Whistleblowing for employees.

Legal Framework

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998