

"Absolutely without fail - challenge poor practice or performance." Barnardos 1999

What is whistle blowing?

Whistle blowing means calling attention to wrongdoing that is occurring within an organisation. Alerting someone outside your organisation or outside your immediate working environment to this wrongdoing. You are legally protected from being victimised for whistle blowing as long as you have followed certain procedures.

This guidance is written for all employees and volunteers working at Saturday Clubs, Youth Clubs and Holiday Playschemes. Staff must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of the Play Services Co-ordinator, the Manager and/or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concern out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young people who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think what if I am wrong — think what if I am right.

Reasons for whistle blowing

Each individual 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 whistle blowing?

- 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. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner it is possible for action to be taken.
- Try to pinpoint what practice is concerning you and why.
- Approach someone you trust and who you believe will respond.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response — don't let matters rest.
- Put your concerns in writing on a confidential Incident Record form. These are in the Incident file present at all clubs.
- Discuss your concerns with the Play Services Co-ordinator.
- 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.
- The Play Services Co-ordinator will undertake an investigation into your concerns and offer you support.
- If the matter cannot be discussed with the Play Services Co-ordinator speak to the manager.
- If the matter cannot be discussed with the manager call Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline 08456 40 40 46 or Children's Services Access Centre 0845 607 2000

Support available for the whistle blower

Malvern Special Families management have a duty to support whistleblowers that act in good faith and it is in the long-term interests of the organisation that they should do so.

Managers notified of a concern:

- have a responsibility to ensure that concerns raised are taken seriously
- where appropriate, should investigate properly and make an objective assessment of the concern
- should keep the employee advised of progress
- have a responsibility to ensure that the action necessary to resolve a concern is taken.
- as with any case where an employee is found to be involved in wrongdoing, they will need to be dealt with effectively in accordance with employment law and contracts of employment
- have a responsibility to protect the employee from harassment or victimisation, this can involve temporary re-deployment where necessary
- no action will be taken against the employee if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith, although management should recognise that it may have consequences for relations between employees.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence

Self reporting

There may be occasions where a member of staff has a personal difficulty, maybe 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 their line manager so professional and personal support can be offered to the member of staff concerned.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

Confidentiality

Whistleblowing will be recorded on confidential Incident Reports. All matters will remain strictly confidential unless doing so would harm the objective assessment of the concern.

- All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the individual's identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however, they may need to come forward as a witness or provide a statement as part of the evidence.
- The Responsible Officers will do all that they reasonably can to support the individual once they have taken the decision to voice their concerns, signposting the employee to external confidential advice.

Anonymous Allegations

- This policy encourages individuals to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.
- Concerns expressed anonymously are less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the line manager.

In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

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

Policy Review

Malvern Special Families will review this policy annually or sooner should new legislation come to light or a related incident arise in the charity.

People to contact:

Caroline Conein, Play Services Co-ordinator
01684 892526 (office)
07875 296043

Maria Munday, Manager of Malvern Special Families
01684 892526 (office)
07971 684 987

Helen Attree, Chairperson & Margaret Buchanan, Vice Chairperson of Malvern Special Families
01684 892526

Ofsted: 0300 123 1231 Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155

Children's Services Access Centre
0845 607 2000