



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

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Policy Reviewer	Director – Kane Wilson

WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY: PROTECTION FOR ALL

At The Ark Smallholding we are committed to openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment we expect employees, and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice those concerns.

We have a whistle-blowing policy to make sure that employees, contractors working on our premises, suppliers, schools, visitors, those providing services under a contract with us in their own premises, and councilors feel confident and are able to raise concerns and to question and act upon concerns.

POLICY COVERAGE

The concerns covered by this whistle-blowing policy are:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law,
- failure to comply with a legal obligation,
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice,
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees,
- damage to the environment,
- the unauthorised use of public funds,
- possible fraud and corruption,
- sexual, physical or other abuse of clients,
- other unethical conduct and
- actions which are unprofessional, inappropriate or conflict with a general understanding of what is right and wrong.

As a company it is vital we operate in a highly professional manner at all times with clear transparent reporting guidelines.

If any person has any causes for concern about any issue including, but not exclusive to, those mentioned in this policy, they are to immediately contact the Director/Designated Safeguarding Lead; details are below. Alternatively, if they wish, they may contact somebody within Leeds City Council's Internal Audit Team, or any of the organisations listed below.

Director: Helen Mcgloughlin info@thearksmallholding.co.uk

Leeds City Council Email: concerns@leeds.gov.uk

PROCEDURES

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

It is important that you feel comfortable in raising legitimate concerns in the public interest, as this provides The Ark with an opportunity to address the associated issues as early as possible. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. Over time these details can be forgotten, or remembered incorrectly, which can make a concern more difficult to investigate and so it would help us if you make a note of your concerns at the time and let us know about them as soon as possible.

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with your immediate manager or other appropriate manager. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues raised and who is thought to be involved. For example, if your concerns are about leadership and management, you should contact the governing body or Leeds City Council internal audit using the contact details below.

All referrals will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Concerns may be raised in writing and/or by email, or initially by telephone to the following:

- Your manager;
- Headteacher/Principal of host school;
- Chair of the governing body;
- Diocese in the case of faith schools;
- Leeds City Council Internal Audit on 0113 3788008
- Leeds City Council Children's Services on 0113 2224444
- Leeds City Council Education Safeguarding Team 0113 3789685
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285

Where a referral is made to Leeds City Council they will determine to whom the concerns should be referred. This will depend on the nature of the issues raised.

Although you are not expected to prove an allegation, you will need to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for your concern. It would be useful to provide relevant information including, where possible, such as:

- The background and history to the case;
- The reason why you are particularly concerned;
- Any specific details available including names, dates, times and places;
- Details of any particular conversations that support the concerns;
- Details of any personal interest that you may have in the matter; and
- How you think that things may be put right, if possible.

If you are concerned about reporting an issue within your educational setting you can seek advice from Leeds City Council's internal audit team.

Concerns can be raised using the following methods:

- Whistleblowing hotline: (0113) 3788008 (a dedicated hotline answered by a member of the internal audit team or an answerphone).
- Email: concerns@leeds.gov.uk
- In writing: Internal Audit, 3rd Floor West, Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1JF

If a concern is discussed with someone directly involved then it creates an opportunity for evidence to be tampered with or removed. Concerns should not be discussed with others unless as part of an appropriately structured investigation. Doing so may leave you open to accusations of making slanderous or libellous comments should your concerns be unfounded, as these could damage the reputation of individuals and The Ark, even if there is no evidence of any wrongdoing.

HOW THE ARK WILL RESPOND TO YOUR CONCERNS

The Ark is committed to treating all concerns raised consistently and fairly. The action taken by The Ark will depend on the nature of the concern. An initial assessment of the information received will be completed by a nominated person as detailed below. This will determine if further investigation will be undertaken and if so who is best placed to complete this.

The Lead Coordinator will make this initial assessment and decide on the most appropriate course of action where concerns are raised about an employee or employees.

Concerns raised about the Lead Coordinator will be assessed by the Chair of Directors who will decide on the appropriate course of action.

Concerns raised about the directing body will be assessed by the Local Authority. Leeds City Council Children's Services may be asked or required to investigate and/or refer the matter for investigation on behalf of The Ark.

Dependent on the issues raised, the nominated person will decide that your concerns may:

- be investigated internally by The Ark, (this is the most likely option);
- be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- be referred to the police;
- be referred to the external auditor;
- be referred to Leeds City Council's Children's Services;
- form the subject of an independent investigation;
- or any combination of the above.

Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection, grievance, school complaints or disciplinary issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation.

Within ten working days of a concern being received, where appropriate, the nominated person will write to you to:

- acknowledge that the concern has been received;
- indicate how they propose the matter is dealt with (including potential

timescales);

- tell you whether any initial enquiries have been made; and
- tell you whether further investigations will take place and, if not, why not.

The Ark acknowledges the need to provide you with assurance that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will receive appropriate information about the extent and outcomes of any investigations.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

Allegations can be made anonymously. However, this policy encourages you to put your name to your allegation, as concerns expressed anonymously are often much more difficult to investigate. You may need to be contacted to obtain further information or verify details provided. The Ark's decision on pursuing anonymous allegations would take into consideration factors including;

- the seriousness of the issues raised
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation through other, attributable sources.

PROTECTIONS FROM REPRISAL FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS WITHIN THE COMPANY

We realise that the decision to report concerns can be difficult and whistleblowers may fear reprisals from those responsible for the malpractice. We are therefore committed to protecting anyone who raises a concern which they have reasonable belief to be true and to be in the public interest. This protection includes protection from disciplinary action against those who report concerns. This does not necessarily mean that if the individual is already the subject of performance procedures, such as disciplinary, performance management, or grievance, that these procedures will be halted.

UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If you make an allegation in the public interest and which you had a reason to believe was true, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make malicious or vexatious allegations which you could not have reasonably believed was true, appropriate action may be taken against you including disciplinary action.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

If you raise a concern and are not confident that it has been dealt with appropriately, you can also refer to one of the following contact points:

- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- Leeds City Council or Council Members
- Your solicitor
- The Police

- Public Concern at Work (020 7404 6609 www.pcaw.org.uk) – an independent charity which provides free employee advice for anyone wishing to express concerns about malpractice.

For complaints relating to a safeguarding nature, please contact;

- CHILDRENS Leeds Safeguarding Duty and Advice Team
In office hours (9am to 5pm) Tel: 0113 376 0336 (option 3)
- Out of hours (evenings, weekends and bank holidays) call the Emergency duty team EDT on Tel: 0113 376 0469
- CSWS Duty and Advice / Front Door Safeguarding Hub
- Urgent Child Protection concerns / initial referral
- Tel: 0113 3760336 (Professionals)
- Tel: 0113 2223301 (Members of the public)
- CSWS Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)
- Urgent Child Protection concerns
Tel: 0113 535 0600
- Email: childrensEDT@leeds.gov.uk
- Local Authority Designated Officer
- Allegations against adults in school
Tel: 0113 378 9687
- If you believe that a child or young person is in immediate danger call the police on 999
- ADULTS Leeds Safeguarding Adult Social Care
Tel: 0113 222 4401
- Out of Hours – Tel: 07712 106 378
- Again in an emergency call 999
- NSPCC
Specialises in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children
- Tel: 0800 800 5000 helpline (adults) 24 hrs per day
- Tel: 0800 1111 helpline (children and young people)
- Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Website: nspcc.org.uk
- Coram Children's Legal Centre
Offers free legal information, advice and representation to children, young people,

their families, carers and professionals.

Tel: 0207 5200300

Website: coram.org.uk

- Family Lives

Provides information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life.

Tel: 0808 800 2222

Email: askus@familylives.org.uk

- Gingerbread

Provides single parents with advice and practical support.

You can call the Gingerbread Single Parent Helpline on;

Tel: 0808 802 0925