

Lower Earley *Family Contact Centre*

Whistleblowing Policy

Lower Earley Family Contact Centre is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, we encourage volunteers and others with genuine concerns about any person linked with the Centre and/or others (e.g. Parents/Carers) to come forward and voice those concerns, without fear of reprisals or victimisation. This policy is intended to encourage and enable volunteers and others to raise such concerns with the Centre rather than overlooking the problem.

The policy allows volunteers, Parents/Carers and outside agencies to raise concerns about the Management or Volunteers of the Centre.

Aims and Scope

This policy aims to:

- provide avenues for you to raise genuine concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- allow you to take the matter further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome or response;
- reassure you that steps will be taken to protect you from reprisals or victimisation for Whistleblowing in good faith.

The "Complaints Procedure" is in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to Parent/Carer concerns or complaints, and issues raised by outside agencies. This Whistleblowing policy is intended to cover genuine concerns that fall outside the scope of that procedure. That concern may be about something that:

- Is against the policies and procedures of the Centre;
- Falls below established standards of practice;
- Amounts to improper conduct;
- Is a Health and Safety risk, including risks to the public as well as children, volunteers, Parents/Carers and others;
- Contributes to a safeguarding risk involving children in the care of the Centre.

The policy will be communicated to all volunteers as well as Parents/Carers as appropriate.

Harassment or Victimisation

The Centre recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. The Centre will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect you when you raise a concern in good faith. However, should you feel that you have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern, you should refer to the "Complaints Procedure".

Confidentiality

The Centre will do its best to protect your identity when you raise a concern. However, it must be appreciated that, in the interests of natural justice, any investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by you may be required as part of the evidence.

Anonymous Allegations

You are strongly encouraged to put your name to any allegations as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. However, anonymous allegations should be submitted to the Management Committee marked "Strictly Confidential, for the attention of the Management Committee" and sent via the Contact Centre address which can be found on the Lower Earley Family Contact Centre website. Anonymous allegations will be considered and any action taken at the discretion of Lower Earley Family Contact Centre and in conjunction with the relevant agencies where appropriate.

In exercising this discretion, the following factors will be taken into account when considering how to deal with any allegations:

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

Malicious or Vexatious Allegations – Volunteers

If you make an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If, however, you make a malicious or vexatious allegation, disciplinary action may be taken against you in accordance with the Lower Earley Family Contact Centre Procedures.

How to raise a Concern (for volunteers)

As a first step, you should normally raise concerns with the Centre Co-ordinator or the team leader on duty. This depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who you think may be involved in the malpractice. For example, if you believe that the Co-ordinator or Team Leader is involved, you should approach the Chair of the Management Committee.

If you feel the Chair of Management Committee may be involved, you should approach any member of the Management Committee. If this is not possible you should raise your concerns with the Chief Executive of NACCC.

With specific regard to Safeguarding issues that may involve a volunteer, you should initially consult with the Co-ordinator. If you suspect they or the management committee may be related to the issue you should contact the NACCC Safeguarding Manager for advice. You can also contact your local authority Children's Services Referrals Department for advice and assistance.

Concerns are better raised in writing. You are advised to set out background and history of your concerns, giving names, dates, times, places, information about witnesses (if any) and, where possible, and the reason why you are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier you express your concern, the easier it is for the Centre, NACCC or your local authority Children's Services Safeguarding Team to take action.

Although you are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for initial enquiries to be made.

How The Centre will respond:

The action taken by the Centre will depend on the nature of the concern. Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The matters raised may then be:

- resolved by agreed action without the need for an investigation.
- investigated internally; via the “Complaints Procedure”.
- referred to the Police.
- referred directly to the NACCC or Children’s Services.

The Centre’s “Complaints Procedure” details the process that will be followed if the complaint is investigated by the Centre.

Any person who is the subject of an allegation would, at the appropriate time, be given details of the allegation in order to respond.

How the matter can be taken further:

If the complaint has not been dealt with in a manner which is satisfactory to the complainant, then they can contact NACCC directly as follows:

National Association of Child Contact Centres
Telephone: 0845 4500 280
contact@naccc.org.uk
www.naccc.org.uk

Full address details can be found on the NACCC website.