

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Safeguarding Children

Whistleblowing

Policy statement

Ready Steady Grow Pre-School is committed to the highest standards of safeguarding, professionalism, openness, honesty and accountability.

We encourage all staff, volunteers, parents, contractors and visitors to speak up promptly about any concern relating to:

- the safety or wellbeing of a child,
- conduct of adults working with children,
- breaches of policy or procedure,
- criminal activity or misconduct,
- poor practice or unsafe practice,
- or any matter that could place a child, staff member or the organisation at risk.

We recognise that people may feel anxious about raising concerns for fear of damaging relationships or facing victimisation. This policy ensures that anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith can do so without fear of reprisal, and will be supported and protected.

Whistleblowing is a statutory safeguarding requirement under the EYFS. The setting must have appropriate whistleblowing procedures for all staff, including students and volunteers, setting out when and how concerns about poor or unsafe safeguarding practice can be raised and what process will follow. Leaders must ensure staff know the procedure, feel able to raise concerns and know that genuine concerns will be taken seriously.

This policy is distinct from the Complaints Procedure and from the Staff Disciplinary Policy. It is for concerns that:

- A whistleblowing concern must never delay action to protect a child. If a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm, staff must follow the Child Protection Policy immediately and contact the DSL and/or Bromley Children and Families Hub; call 999 where there is immediate danger.
- relate to wrongdoing that affects others,
- fall outside personal employment grievances, or
- raise safeguarding or public-interest issues.

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What Concerns Should Be Reported?

Concerns may include (but are not limited to):

- behaviour or actions that place a child at risk of harm;
- breaches of the EYFS, safeguarding policies or Ofsted requirements;
- unsafe ratios, supervision failures or poor safeguarding practice;
- failure to follow child protection procedures or report concerns;
- actions that fall below professional standards;
- fraud, misuse of funds or resources;
- health and safety risks;
- discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- covering up wrongdoing;
- criminal behaviour or suspected criminal behaviour.

You do not need proof. A reasonable belief or honest suspicion is enough.

Culture and Expectations

We promote a culture where:

- concerns are raised immediately,
- staff understand that safeguarding overrides loyalty to colleagues,
- no one is ever penalised for whistleblowing in good faith,
- leaders respond transparently, proportionately and promptly.

No whistleblower will suffer detriment, harassment or dismissal for raising concerns properly.

How to Raise a Concern Internally

Step 1 – Report to the Manager

In most cases, concerns should be raised with the Pre-School Manager (Designated Safeguarding Lead).

Concerns may be raised:

- verbally,
- in writing,
- via email or confidential note,
- anonymously (although anonymity may limit our ability to investigate).

All concerns will be treated with strict confidentiality.

If the concern involves the Manager

If you believe the Manager may be involved, or you are uncomfortable raising the concern with them, you may contact:

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- Deputy Manager
- Committee/Registered Provider/Owner
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (if different)

Raising Concerns Externally (When Internal Reporting Is Not Safe or Appropriate)

If you feel unable to raise the matter internally or believe it has not been handled appropriately, you may contact any of the following:

Bromley Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - allegations/concerns about adults working with children

LADO referrals should be made through Bromley's Children, Young People and Families Hub Portal. For LADO/BSCP advice: 020 8461 7816; BSCP@bromley.gov.uk. Do not investigate an allegation yourself before seeking appropriate safeguarding/LADO advice.

Bromley Children and Families Hub (C&F Hub) - safeguarding concerns

020 8461 7373 / 7379 (Monday-Friday, 8.30am-5pm); candfhub@bromley.gov.uk

Out-of-hours/weekends/public holidays: 0300 303 8671

Ofsted - complaints/concerns about a registered early years provider

Use Ofsted's current complaints procedure and reporting routes on GOV.UK.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285; help@nspcc.org.uk (where staff cannot raise concerns with their employer or genuine concerns are not being addressed).

Police

999 if a child is at immediate risk

101 for non-emergency concerns

Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work)

Independent whistleblowing charity offering confidential advice.

• Staff may also seek independent advice from Protect and may make a protected disclosure to an appropriate prescribed person or body where the legal requirements of the Employment Rights Act 1996 / Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 are met.

• Personal employment grievances (for example, an individual dispute about terms of employment) will normally be managed under the grievance procedure unless the matter also raises a wider public-interest or safeguarding concern.

What Happens After You Raise a Concern

- Concerns will be acknowledged within five working days.
- An initial assessment will determine whether an investigation is required and what type (internal, external, multi-agency).
- If urgent action is needed to safeguard a child, this will be taken immediately.
- An investigating officer will be appointed where appropriate.

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- You will receive feedback (within confidentiality limits) within 10 working days, and subsequently until the matter is resolved.
- If the concern cannot be discussed (due to confidentiality), you will be told this.

Records of concerns, actions and outcomes will be kept securely in line with data-protection requirements.

Confidentiality and Protection

We will protect your identity as far as possible and practicable. However, during investigations you may at times be required to act as a witness.

Where a worker makes a qualifying disclosure in the public interest and meets the legal requirements for whistleblowing protection, they are protected from dismissal or detriment because of that disclosure. The setting will also support anyone who raises a genuine safeguarding concern responsibly.

- dismissal,
- disciplinary action,
- loss of work or opportunities,
- threats,
- victimisation.

The organisation will take firm action against anyone who harasses, threatens or retaliates against a whistleblower.

Malicious or knowingly false allegations, however, may result in disciplinary action.

What You MUST NOT Do

To protect yourself, the investigation and the children, you must not:

- investigate the concern yourself;
- discuss the concern with colleagues or any third party;
- approach or challenge the person suspected of wrongdoing;
- delay raising concerns;
- attempt to gather evidence covertly;
- post concerns on social media.

Always follow the steps described in this policy.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is underpinned by:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

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- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR
- Criminal Justice and Courts Services Act 2000
- • Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (whistleblowing protections)
- • Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026)
- • London Child Protection Procedures (current version)
- Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures

September 2026 safeguarding update

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 expects organisations to have clear whistleblowing procedures, referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture in which safeguarding concerns can be raised and addressed.
- The setting will ensure whistleblowing is covered at induction and through safeguarding training/supervision, including how to use internal and external routes and the distinction between whistleblowing, complaints, grievances and allegations against adults.
- Records will be factual, secure and access-limited. Information will be shared when necessary to safeguard children; data-protection law must not be treated as a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier if:

- legislation changes,
- safeguarding guidance updates,
- an incident requires learning and revision,
- Ofsted or the local authority recommends changes.

Staff receive regular training on whistleblowing, safeguarding and professional responsibilities.