

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure

This Policy Relates to the following Legislation

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

This Policy Relates to the following Regulations

- The Guide to the Children's Homes [England] Regulations 2015 including the Quality Standards April 2015
- Regulation 12(2)(e) and 34(6) of The Children's Homes [England] Regulations 2015

This Policy Applies To:

- a) All those directly employed by The Lioncare Group and who are in positions and roles that require them to interact with or work alongside or around or in proximity to the children in our care.
- b) All those indirectly employed by The Lioncare Group by virtue of being sub-contracted or commissioned and paid by The Lioncare Group to carry out work on behalf of The Lioncare Group and where such work causes them to interact with or work alongside or around or in proximity to the children in our care.
- c) All those working in partnership with The Lioncare Group in the form of voluntary work or student placements and where such work or activity involves interacting with or work alongside or around or in proximity to the children in our care.

Responsibilities Associated with this Policy:

All employees, whether they are 'front-line' engaged directly in the task of caring for, educating, and supporting the children in our care, or 'ancillary' (e.g. House Keeper, Maintenance Worker, Administrator etc.), are personally responsible for managing their own conduct in relation to following this policy.

All employees whether they are 'front-line' or 'ancillary' are also responsible for supporting their colleagues and co-workers to follow this policy.

Members of the Management Team (Senior Therapeutic Carers, Senior Learning Support Assistant, Senior Pastoral Lead, Deputy Managers, Registered Managers, Head Teacher) are responsible for ensuring all those employed directly are made aware of this policy and guidance, and for managing and monitoring its appropriate implementation, and for taking necessary action to guard against any breach of this policy.

The Executive Team (Assistant Directors and Chief Executive Officer) are responsible for reviewing this policy and at least annually and more frequently if and when it is considered necessary to do so, and for ensuring this policy remains fit-for-purpose.

Monitoring and Review of this Policy:

The implementation of this policy and its corresponding guidance will be monitored continuously, and the policy itself will be reviewed at least annually by the Executive Team and in consultation with relevant others.

Policy Statement

Consistent with the emphasis The Lioncare Group places on maintaining and promoting a healthy and effective Safeguarding Culture across our organisation, the safety and protection and welfare of the children living in our homes and learning in our school, the integrity of the business, and the need to act with uncompromising ethics, we believe all adults employed by The Lioncare Group or concerned with its management and organisation, or associated with the work of our homes and school and the welfare of the children should be able to raise issues of concern if they feel that wrongdoing or bad practice is occurring.

If an adult has a concern that the principles upon which this statement is based have been compromised for whatever reason, they should bring their concerns to the attention of their line manager in the first instance.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters from being dismissed by The Lioncare Group or from being subjected to detrimental treatment or victimised by either The Lioncare Group or work colleagues as a result, provided certain criteria are met.

The Act makes provision about the kinds of disclosure which may be protected and the circumstances in which disclosures are protected. These rules are therefore intended to comply with the Act by encouraging employees to make disclosures about fraud, misconduct, bribery or other wrongdoing to The Lioncare Group, without fear of reprisal, so that problems can be identified, dealt with and resolved quickly.

The Lioncare Group's policy is to support workers who raise protected disclosures. Employees must not victimise, subject to detrimental treatment or retaliate against an employee, worker, agency worker, consultant or contractor who has made a protected disclosure.

Employees are protected provided they reveal information of the right type (known as a "qualifying disclosure") and they reveal that information to the right person and in the right way (known as making a "protected disclosure").

Qualifying Disclosures

Certain kinds of disclosure qualify for protection. These are disclosures of information which you reasonably believe are made in the public interest and tend to show one or more of the following relevant failures is either currently happening, took place in the past, or is likely to happen in the future:

- a criminal offence, including offences such as theft, fraud or acts of bribery
- 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 concealment of information tending to show any of the above five matters.

Only disclosures of information that fall within one or more of these six categories qualify for protection.

Your belief must be reasonable, but it need not be correct. It might be discovered subsequently that you were, in fact, wrong or mistaken in your belief, but you must be able to show that you held the belief and that it was a reasonable belief to hold in the circumstances at the time of disclosure. Note that it is not your responsibility to investigate the matter. That is the responsibility of The Lioncare Group.

You must also reasonably believe that your disclosure is made in the public interest. It will therefore not include disclosures which can properly be characterised as being of an entirely personal rather than a wider public interest, for example a disclosure about a breach of the terms of your own contract of employment which does not affect anyone else. In assessing the reasonableness of your belief in this regard, you should be aware that the following factors will be relevant:

- the number of individuals whose interests your disclosure served
- the nature of the alleged wrongdoing
- the nature of the interests affected
- the extent to which they're affected by the alleged wrongdoing disclosed and the identity of the wrongdoer.

Protected Disclosures

For a qualifying disclosure to be a protected disclosure, you need to make it to the right person and in the right way. There are a number of methods by which you can make a protected disclosure, but The Lioncare Group always encourages all employees, workers, agency workers, consultants and contractors to **raise any disclosure internally** in the first instance.

You are protected if you make a qualifying disclosure to either:

- The Lioncare Group

- Where you reasonably believe that the relevant failure relates solely or mainly to the conduct of a person other than The Lioncare Group or any other matter for which a person other than The Lioncare Group has legal responsibility, to that other person.

You are encouraged to raise any qualifying disclosures that you may have by following the disclosure procedure set out below.

If your concern relates to a breach of your own contract of employment which does not affect anyone else, you should use The Lioncare Group's grievance procedure instead as these types of disclosure are not made in the public interest (as they only affect your own personal interests) and are therefore not covered by this policy.

The Disclosure Procedure

This procedure applies to all permanent and temporary employees and workers. In addition, third parties such as agency workers, consultants and contractors and any others who perform functions in relation to The Lioncare Group should use it.

The procedure is as follows:

1. If you wish to make a qualifying disclosure, you should, in the first instance, report the situation in writing to your Registered Manager / Head Teacher (or one of the Assistant Directors at Lioncare House if you are an agency worker, consultant or contractor), setting out in detail the nature of your disclosure. If you do not wish to contact your Registered Manager / Head Teacher, you can instead contact an Assistant Director at Lioncare House.
2. Such disclosures should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed and any action taken expeditiously.
3. All qualifying disclosures will be treated seriously. The disclosure will be promptly investigated and, as part of the investigatory process, you will be interviewed and asked to provide a written witness statement setting out the nature and details of your qualifying disclosure and the basis for it. Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigatory process to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. However, in order to effectively investigate a disclosure, The Lioncare Group must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed of or interviewed about the disclosure. The Lioncare Group reserves the right to arrange for another member of the Leadership Team to conduct the investigation other than the manager with whom you raised the matter.
4. Once the investigation has been completed, you will be informed in writing of the outcome and The Lioncare Group's conclusions and decision as soon as possible. The Lioncare Group is committed to taking appropriate action with respect to all qualifying disclosures which are upheld.
5. You will not be penalised for raising a qualifying disclosure even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made with malice.
6. Once The Lioncare Group's conclusions have been finalised, any necessary action will be taken. This could include either reporting the matter to an appropriate external government department or regulatory agency and/or taking internal disciplinary action against relevant members of staff. If no action is to be taken, the reasons for this will be explained to you.
7. If, on conclusion of the above stages, you reasonably believe that appropriate action has not been taken, you may then report the matter externally to the proper authority in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The Act sets out a number of prescribed external bodies or persons to which qualifying disclosures may be made and you can access these at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies-2>. However, The Lioncare Group always encourages all employees, workers, agency workers, consultants and contractors to raise their concerns directly in the first instance, rather than externally. This enables issues to be dealt with promptly and speedily.

General Principles

- be aware of the importance of eliminating fraud, misconduct, bribery or other wrongdoing at work. Report anything that you become aware of that is illegal or unlawful

- you will not be victimised, subjected to a detriment or dismissed for raising a protected disclosure under this procedure
- victimisation of an employee, worker, agency worker, consultant or contractor, or subjecting them to any form of detrimental treatment or retaliation (including bullying and harassment), for raising a protected disclosure under this procedure will not be tolerated by The Lioncare Group, is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under The Lioncare Group's disciplinary procedure. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to potential gross misconduct and could result in your summary dismissal
- be aware that you can also be held personally liable for any act of victimisation or detrimental treatment of an employee or worker on the ground that they made a protected disclosure
- you should immediately draw the attention of your Registered Manager / Head Teacher to suspected cases of victimisation or detrimental treatment related to either you or another employee, worker, agency worker, consultant or contractor having made a protected disclosure
- covering up someone else's wrongdoing is also a disciplinary offence. Never agree to remain silent about a wrongdoing, even if told to do so by a person in authority, such as your Registered Manager / Head Teacher or an Assistant Director or the Chief Executive Officer.
- your right to make a protected disclosure under this procedure overrides any confidentiality provisions in your contract of employment
- finally, maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence and will be dealt with under The Lioncare Group's disciplinary procedure. If you are a third party, such as an agency worker, consultant or contractor, it could result in your engagement being terminated.