



FIRST STEP PLAYGROUP



Policies and Procedures

2. Suitable People

Employment

6.6 Whistle Blowing Policy

Introduction

First Step Playgroup is committed to the highest possible standard of operation and accountability, and recognises that its workers are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within First Step Playgroup. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to First Step Playgroup, and they may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may be just a suspicion of malpractice.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who raise concerns from harassment or victimisation. In accordance with the Act and its commitments to the highest standards of service delivery, First Step Playgroup encourages its workers with serious concerns about any aspect of First Step Playgroup's work to come forward and voice those concerns, in confidence, within First Step Playgroup rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

Objective

The aim of this policy and its associated procedures is to establish an internal mechanism that will encourage and enable workers to raise concerns about any aspect of First Step Playgroup's work, (which do not meet the criteria for being dealt with as a complaint or grievance) in confidence and without fear of reprisals, to ensure that First Step Playgroup continues to improve its services and provide best value.

Scope

Concerns that should be raised via the whistle blowing policy may be in relation to the action /behaviours of other workers and may be about something that is perceived as:

- unlawful: or
- against other policies: or
- falling below established standard or practice: or
- amounting to improper conduct.

Concerns that fall outside the scope of the whistle blowing policy are those raised by workers:

- about their own conditions of service: these should be addressed via the Grievance Procedure of Bullying and Harassment at Work Procedure, depending on the nature/ seriousness of the complaint:
or
- as or on the behalf of a service user*: these should be addressed via the Complaints Procedure.

**In exceptional circumstances, where the complaint involves a number of service users, or the service user is unable/unwilling to make the complaint personally, the whistle blowing policy may be followed.*

This policy is based on the following fundamental principles:

- All workers have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all workers, and under First Step Playgroup's Health and Safety Policy workers are expected to raise concerns about potential health and safety risks.
- First Step Playgroup will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect workers when they raise a concern in good faith.
- First Step Playgroup will do its best to protect a worker's identity when he/she raises a concern and does not want his/her name to be disclosed. However, if the concern raised needs to be addressed through another procedure, e.g. disciplinary procedure, the worker may be required to provide a signed statement as part of the evidence.
- In some circumstances First Step Playgroup may have to disclose the identity of the worker without his/her consent, although this will be discussed with the worker first.
- Appropriate advice and support will be made available to workers who raise concerns.
- Workers who raise concerns will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any investigation.
- First Step Playgroup will not tolerate malicious allegations, which may be considered a disciplinary offence.

Procedures

Procedures for reporting and investigating 'whistle blowing' concerns have been developed to ensure that:

- avenues exist for workers to raise concerns internally as a matter of course, and receive feedback on any action taken.
- concerns are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- workers are reassured they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.
- workers can take the matter further if they are unsatisfied with First Step Playgroup's response.
- issues raised are addressed via other procedures as appropriate.
- appropriate records are maintained for monitoring purposes.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

First Step Playgroup, Somersham

Held on

16th September 2016

Date to be reviewed

September 2017

Signed on behalf of the management

Name of signatory

Angie Kelly

Role of signatory

Playgroup Director