

Whistleblowing Policy

Employees and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within their setting. However, they may not express their growing concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues. 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 suspicion of malpractice and wrongdoing at work.

Bristol Child Contact Centre is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, we encourage employees, volunteers and others with genuine concerns about any person linked with the setting and/or others (e.g. Parents/Carers) to come forward and voice those concerns.

This policy document makes it clear that employees, volunteers, Parents/Carers and others can do so without fear of reprisals or victimisation. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees/volunteers and others to raise such concerns **within** Bristol Child Contact Centre rather than overlooking the problem.

The procedure allows employees volunteers, Parents/Carers and outside agencies to raise concerns about the Management/Staff/Volunteers of Bristol Child Contact Centre.

AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

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.

There are existing procedures in place to enable you to lodge a grievance relating to staff's own employment, 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 other procedures. That concern may be about something that:

- Is against the policies and procedures of Bristol Child Contact Centre;
- Falls below established standards of practice;
- Amounts to improper conduct - including being aware that an employee or volunteer has committed a crime;
- Is a Health and Safety risk, including risks to the public as well as children, other colleagues, Parents/Carers and others;
- Contradicts Bristol Child Contact Centre's Code of Conduct.
- Contributes to a safeguarding risk involving children in the care of Bristol Child Contact Centre

The procedure will be communicated to all employees and volunteers as well as Parents/Carers, Students and others.

HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

Bristol Child Contact Centre recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal. Bristol Child Contact 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 Employees Handbook (staff and volunteers), or Complaints Policy (Parents/Carers).

This does not mean that if you are already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of your Whistleblowing. This applies to Parents/Carers using the centre.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Bristol Child Contact 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 allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. Anonymous allegations will be considered and any action taken at the discretion of Bristol Child 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 – STAFF & 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 Bristol Child Contact Centre Procedures.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN (for employees and 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 CCC 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 member of staff/volunteer, you should initially consult with the CCC 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. Contact details are available at the end of this policy.

Concerns are better raised in writing. You are advised to set out background and history of your concerns, giving names, dates and places, 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 Child Contact 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 BRISTOL CHILD CONTACT CENTRE WILL RESPOND:

The action taken by the child contact centre will depend on the nature of the concern. The matters raised may:
Be investigated internally;
Be referred to the Police;

Allegations referred directly to the NACCC or Children's Services will be dealt with in accordance with their policies and procedures. Any person who is the subject of an allegation should, at the appropriate times be given details of the allegation in order to respond.

In order to protect individuals, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. Concerns or allegations that fall within the scope of specific procedures (e.g. Safeguarding or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures. Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for an investigation. The following process

will be followed in the event of complaints:

Bristol Child Contact Centre will ensure that a letter is sent to confirm the receipt of the complaint. The complaint will then be fully investigated and within 5 days of when the complaint was first received. Bristol Child Contact Centre endeavours to investigate all complaints in a non discriminatory manner. A letter will be sent detailing how Bristol Child Contact Centre has dealt with the complaint.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER:

If the complaint has not been dealt with in a manner which is satisfactory to the employee, volunteer or Parent/Carer or others involved, 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

The local authority Children's Services Duty Team 24 hour telephone number is: 01454 615165

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