

Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures



We, the Parasol Project, aim to always conduct ourselves and deliver our services ethically with honesty and integrity. However, if anyone who encounters our organisation has a genuine concern that illegal and improper conduct is being undertaken, they should follow our Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when anyone who has contact with Parasol raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity or any wrongdoing within our organisation. Raising a concern is known as "blowing the whistle" and is a vital process for identifying risks to people's safety. Sharing information or talking through a concern can be the first step to helping an organisation identify problems and improve their practices.

Protecting the 'whistleblower'

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996. It provides protection for individuals who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters outlined below.

These are called qualifying disclosures. A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith by an individual who has a reasonable belief that:

- A criminal offence (including fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, e.g. theft, fraud, or malpractice).
- A miscarriage of justice
- An act that creates a risk to health and safety
- An act that causes damage to the environment.
- A breach of any other legal obligations
- The concealment of any of the above

It is not necessary for you to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be committed. You do, however, need to hold a reasonable belief of such an action having been, being or likely to be carried out.

If you make such a protected disclosure, you have the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised. This is the case even

were it to materialise that you were genuinely mistaken. Parasol will not tolerate any individual being subjected to a detriment as a result of their making a disclosure in good faith.

Under UK law, volunteers are not afforded the same legal protection that is afforded to employees. As the Parasol Project, however, we want to promote and encourage an honest environment in which concerns can be freely raised. We will therefore, where at all possible, aim to treat all individuals making a disclosure in the spirit of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988.

Confidentiality

All allegations will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a whistleblower's identity unless they otherwise request.

However, if the matter is subsequently dealt with through other procedures such as the Disciplinary Procedure, the whistleblower's identity may be revealed. Similarly, if the allegation results in court proceedings then the whistleblower may have to give evidence in open court if the case is to be successful. The Parasol Project will not, without the whistleblower's consent, disclose their identity to anyone other than a person involved in the investigation/allegation.

Internal & External Whistleblowing Procedures

Please see the procedures in the appendices below for full details however, here is a brief summary. You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible. This will make it easier to act and enable any problems to be reported or resolved quickly.

1. You should always look to raise the matter with your line manager in the first instance. For all Parasol staff and volunteers this will be the Executive Director. Where this is not appropriate, you may contact the Tower Playbase Coordinator.
2. Where this is not appropriate because both of these people may be involved in the alleged malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal acts or omissions in some way, raise your concern with the Chairperson of Parasol's Board of Trustees.
3. In circumstances where it would be inappropriate for you to approach your line manager or the Chair of the Board of Trustees, you should raise the matter directly with the appropriate agencies.

Untrue Allegations

No disciplinary or other action will be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to

do so even if the allegation is not substantiated by an investigation. However, disciplinary action may be taken against a whistleblower who makes an allegation without reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so (e.g. making an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain where there is no element of public interest).

Further Help and Assistance

If, at any stage in the procedure, you are unsure about what to do and would like independent advice, you can discuss your concern with someone at Protect. This body is an independent charity staffed by lawyers, which offers free and confidential legal advice on how people can raise concerns about malpractice at work. They can also provide advice about what legal protection may be available to you. You can find them by following the following link: <https://protect-advice.org.uk>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Internal Whistleblowing Procedure

1. Raising a Concern

You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible. This will make it easier to act and enable any problems to be reported or resolved quickly. You can make your disclosure orally, but written disclosures are preferable as these will make the process more efficient and effective. In your disclosure you should:

- Provide all relevant information including
 - Dates
 - Time
 - Venue
 - Who was involved?
- State clearly why the situation causes concern

You must say that you are raising your concern using the whistleblowing policy and whether you wish your identity to be kept confidential. While we will make every effort to deal with your case confidentially, depending on the circumstances of the case this may not always be possible. Where this is the case, you will be notified of this and told the reasons why it is not possible.

We will consider anonymous disclosures, but we do not encourage them as anonymity often makes it difficult to properly investigate concerns, protect employees or give feedback on any outcomes.

2. Who Should I Raise My Concerns With?

Executive Director - Dan Norey:

07483156400

dan@parasolproject.org

Tower Playbase Coordinator – Kat Smart:

07484907748

playbase@parasolproject.org

Where this is not appropriate because they may be involved in the alleged malpractice, wrongdoing or illegal acts or omissions in some way, raise your concern with the Chairperson of Parasol's Board of Trustees.

Chair of the Board of Trustees - Dan Wadsworth:

07881707216

danielw@jessopandcook.co.uk

3. What Happens After I Raise a Concern?

Your disclosure will always be acknowledged within 3 working days. It will be investigated by the person that you raise your concern to. They will arrange to meet you as soon as possible, away from the workplace if necessary, to enable you to explain your concern. We may not always be able to keep your details confidential, but we will always let you know if it is not possible to do so.

You will be told either at the meeting or as soon as possible afterwards, what action will be taken to address the concerns you have raised. Where action is not taken, you will be informed and given an explanation. The action taken in response to a disclosure will depend on the nature of the concern.

Typically, a concern raised may result in one or more of the following responses:

- No action required
- Action being taken according to Parasol Project policies or procedures
- An internal investigation under this policy or procedure
- A referral to the police or other relevant statutory body
- A referral to Ofsted
- A referral to the Charity Commission
- An independent enquiry

Any Parasol manager or senior figure receiving a potential whistleblowing concern must notify the Board of Trustees immediately and inform them of progress in resolving the concern.

Appendix B: External Whistleblowing Procedure

Non-Safeguarding concerns:

We strongly encourage you to exhaust the internal processes set out above in the first instances. In exceptional or urgent circumstances, however, or where, having made a disclosure, you are unhappy with the outcome, you have a legal right to make a disclosure to relevant bodies.

These include but are not limited to:

- Charity Commission
- HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Financial Services Authority (FSA)
- Office of Fair Trading
- Environmental Agency
- Fundraising Regulator

Similar to the rights and obligations of an employee, Parasol reserves the right to make a referral to any of the above agencies without your consent.

Safeguarding Concerns:

If you are unsure whether to make a referral you can contact the Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) and request a 'no names' consultation (meaning you don't give the child's name). You can then discuss the situation with them and they will advise you on what to do next. If a referral needs to be made, they will advise you of this.

LCSS Central: 0345 241 2705

LCSS North (including Banbury, Witney, Bicester, Carterton and Woodstock):
0345 241 2703

LCSS South (including Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage, Thame, Didcot and Henley): 0345 241 2608

Where you are confident there is a safeguarding concern and you need to make a referral, you should do so by contacting the LADO using the below details:

LADO – Alison Beasley:

01865815956

alison.beasley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If appropriate, the LADO may arrange for the concern to be investigated externally and independent of Parasol, and for appropriate follow-up action to be taken.