



Whistleblowing policy

Over Kellet Playgroup is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. In line with our safeguarding responsibilities under the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – September 2025, this policy encourages all staff, committee members and volunteers to raise concerns about any aspect of our practice that may compromise the welfare of children or the integrity of the setting.

We promote a culture where concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal and are handled professionally, appropriately, and promptly. At Over Kellet Playgroup staff have an individual responsibility and right to raise matters of concern regarding the poor or insufficient practice at work. The staff's priority is the wellbeing and safety of all children attending the setting. This takes priority over any loyalty towards work colleagues.

Purpose of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible.
- Provide clear procedures for reporting concerns.
- Ensure concerns are taken seriously and investigated appropriately.
- Protect whistleblowers from victimisation or harassment.

This policy applies to:

- All staff (including permanent, temporary, and agency staff)
- Volunteers
- Students on placement
- Contractors working within the setting

We have other policies and procedures in place to cover grievance and complaints. This whistleblowing policy is intended to compliment those. This policy will cover any concerns that fall outside the scope of the other policies.

Procedure for Raising a Concern

Concerns should be raised as soon as possible. You do not need to have proof — a genuine concern is enough. Concerns may come from a parent/carer, child, colleague, or the public.

Allegations or concerns must be referred to the designated safeguarding lead without delay - even if the person making the allegation later withdraws it.

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Lynsey Winder
- **Deputy DSL:** Jackie Hunter

If the concern is about the DSL or management, or if you feel it has not been dealt with properly, you can contact:

- **Zoe Midgley** – Chair of Over Kellet Playgroup Committee
- **Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline:** 0300 123 3155
(Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)
- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):** 01772 536694
- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** 0800 028 0285
(Email: help@nspcc.org.uk)

Levels of concern

What is a low-level concern?

The NSPCC defines a low-level concern as ‘any concern that an adult has acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work
- doesn’t meet the threshold of harm or is not considered serious enough...to refer to the local authority.

Low-level concerns are part of a spectrum of behaviour. This includes:

- inadvertent or thoughtless behaviour
- behaviour that might be considered inappropriate depending on the circumstances.
- behaviour which is intended to enable abuse.

Examples of such behaviour could include:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- adults taking photographs of children on their mobile phone.
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language’

(NSPCC [Responding to low-level concerns about adults working in education](#))

Responding to low-level concerns

Any concerns about the conduct of staff, students or volunteers must be shared with the designated safeguarding lead and recorded. The designated safeguarding lead should be informed of all concerns, including those that may initially be considered ‘low level’ and

make the final decision on how to respond. Where appropriate this can be done in consultation with their line manager.

Reporting concerns about the conduct of a colleague, student or volunteer contributes towards a safeguarding culture of openness and trust. It ensures that adults consistently model the setting's values and helps keep children safe. It protects adults from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

If it is not clear that a concern meets the local authority threshold, the designated safeguarding lead should contact the LADO for clarification.

In most instances, low-level concerns about staff conduct can be addressed through supervision, training, or disciplinary processes where an internal investigation may take place.

Identifying concerns about serious harm, or abuse

An allegation against a member of staff, volunteer or agency staff constitutes serious harm or abuse if they:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject. This includes non-compliance with policies and procedures, breaches of EYFS and/or registration requirements

Informing

- All staff report allegations to the designated safeguarding lead.
- The designated safeguarding lead needs to seek advice from the LADO immediately. It is essential that no investigation occurs until and unless the LADO has expressly given consent for this to occur, however, the person responding to the allegation does need to understand what explicitly is being alleged.
- The designated safeguarding lead must take steps to ensure the immediate safety of children, parents, and staff on that day within the setting.
- The designated safeguarding lead asks for clarification from the LADO on the following areas:
 - what actions the designated safeguarding lead must take next and when and how the parents/carers of the child are informed of the allegation
 - whether or not the LADO thinks a criminal offence may have occurred and whether the police should be informed and if so, who will inform them
 - whether the LADO is happy for the provider to pursue an internal investigation without input from the LADO, or how the LADO wants to proceed

- whether the LADO thinks the person concerned should be suspended, and whether they have any other suggestions about the actions the designated person has taken to ensure the safety of the children and staff attending the setting
- Notification to Ofsted is required for any allegations made against a member of staff, therefore the designated safeguarding lead will inform Ofsted as soon as possible, but no later than 14 days after the event has occurred. The designated safeguarding lead will liaise with the designated officer/line manager about notifying Ofsted.
- All allegations are investigated even if the person involved resigns or ceases to be a volunteer.

Allegations against the designated safeguarding lead.

If a member of staff has concerns that the designated safeguarding lead has behaved in a way that indicates they are not suitable to work with children as listed above, this is reported to the deputy safeguarding lead, following the setting's whistleblowing process, who will investigate further. If allegations are made against both the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding lead, this should be taken to the Chair of the Committee, Zoe Midgley.

Disclosure and Barring Service

- If a member of staff is dismissed because of a proven or strong likelihood of child abuse, inappropriate behaviour towards a child, or other behaviour that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children such as drug or alcohol abuse, or other concerns raised during supervision when the staff suitability checks are done, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service is made.

Escalating and whistleblowing concerns

- If a member of staff at Over Kellet Playgroup believes at any time that children may be in danger due to the actions, or otherwise, of a member of staff or volunteer, they must discuss their concerns immediately with the designated safeguarding lead.
- If after discussions with the designated safeguarding lead, they still believe that appropriate action to protect children has not been taken they must report their concerns to LADO or Ofsted.

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to any significant changes in legislation or practice. The policy will be updated accordingly, and staff will be informed of any changes.

This policy was adopted on by Over Kellet Playgroup on 2nd September 2025