

# Noa's Place CIO Whistleblowing Policy (Speaking Up)

## 1. Policy Statement and Purpose

### 1.1. Commitment to Integrity

Noa's Place CIO is committed to the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and ethical conduct. We value the input of all individuals who work with us and recognise that they are often the first to spot wrongdoing. We encourage all individuals to raise genuine and serious concerns about suspected wrongdoing or malpractice at the earliest possible stage.

### 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage all workers and volunteers to raise concerns internally and safely.
- Provide a clear, confidential mechanism for raising concerns.
- Ensure that disclosures are investigated promptly, fairly, and appropriately.
- Protect individuals who make disclosures in good faith from any form of victimisation or detrimental treatment.

## 2. Scope and Coverage

### 2.1. Who is Covered by This Policy?

This policy applies to anyone who works with or for Noa's Place CIO, including:

- Employees (full-time, part-time, fixed-term, or temporary).
- Trustees (Charity Members).
- Volunteers, placement students, and community supporters.
- Agency staff, contractors, and consultants carrying out work on behalf of the CIO.

### 2.2. Legal Protection Note

The legal protections under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) primarily apply to 'workers' (as defined by the Employment Rights Act 1996). Noa's Place CIO is committed to treating all individuals who make a disclosure in good faith, including volunteers and trustees, with fairness and protection from victimisation in line with the ethos of PIDA, even where statutory legal protection does not apply.

## 3. Definition of Whistleblowing (Qualifying Disclosures)

### 3.1. What to Report

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information in the public interest which the individual reasonably believes shows a serious wrongdoing, risk, or danger.

You should report concerns that you reasonably believe are true and relate to one or more of the following categories of wrongdoing:

- **Criminal offences:** e.g., financial mismanagement, theft, or fraud (including from the

community shop or café).

- **Failure to comply with legal obligations:** e.g., breaches of Charity Law, food hygiene failures in the café, or fire safety issues in the sensory rooms.
- **Danger to health and safety:** e.g., unsafe environments, unsafe staff-to-child ratios, broken sensory equipment being ignored, or dangerous overcrowding in the indoor playground.
- **Safeguarding failures or risks:** e.g., inappropriate behaviour from staff or volunteers; repeated failure to follow safeguarding procedures; or poor organisational culture that places children at risk.
- **Deliberate concealment** of any of the above.

**Important note:** You can whistleblow if there are unsafe safeguarding cultures, poor practice, or systemic failures that go beyond a single incident (even where no individual incident is currently being treated as an emergency).

### 3.2. What This Policy is Not For

- **Personal Grievances:** Issues about your own situation (e.g., pay, terms, individual bullying, or personal disputes) should be raised through the **Grievance Policy**.
- **Immediate Safeguarding:** If a child or adult is at immediate risk of harm, follow the **Safeguarding Policy** emergency procedures first (and contact emergency services where required). This whistleblowing policy is for reporting the *failure* of those systems or a culture of non-compliance, poor practice, or systemic risk.

## 4. Procedure for Raising a Concern (Internal)

You do not need to have definitive proof, but you must have a **reasonable belief** that the wrongdoing is happening, has happened, or is likely to happen.

Concerns should ideally be raised in writing (email or letter), setting out the background, history, names, dates, and places where possible.

### 4.1. Designated Contacts for Whistleblowing

You should follow the hierarchy below unless the concern involves the individual named at that stage, in which case you should escalate immediately to the next stage.

Stage	Person to Contact	Role	Contact Details
Stage 1	Josh Barnes	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	josh.barnes@noasp lace.org.uk

<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Mathew Atkinson</b>	Designated Safeguarding Trustee Lead	TBC EMAIL
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Laura Maroney or Megan Taylor</b>	Chair of the Board of Trustees	TBC EMAIL
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Any other Trustee</b>	Trustee	See Register of Trustees

**4.2. Confidentiality and Anonymous Disclosures**

- **Confidentiality:** We will treat all disclosures in confidence and will not disclose your identity without your express permission, unless required to do so by law (e.g., in a criminal investigation or court order).
- **Anonymous Disclosures:** Concerns may be raised anonymously. However, anonymous reports can be significantly harder to investigate and verify, potentially limiting the action that can be taken. We encourage you to provide contact details if possible.

**5. Investigation and Protection**

5.1. Protection from Detriment

Any individual who makes a disclosure in good faith and with a reasonable belief will be protected from dismissal, victimisation, or any other detrimental treatment because of the disclosure. Any retaliation against a whistleblower will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter, up to and including gross misconduct.

5.2. Investigation Process

Upon receiving a concern, the designated person (from the table above) will:

1. **Acknowledgement:** You will receive a written acknowledgement of your concern within **5 working days**.
2. **Investigation:** An appropriate Investigating Officer (usually a Trustee or independent third party) will be appointed.
3. **Completion:** We aim to complete the investigation within **28 days**. If the matter is complex and requires more time, we will communicate the reasons for the extension and provide an updated timeline.
4. **Updates:** You will receive regular updates on the progress of the investigation and will be informed of the outcome in writing, subject to data protection and confidentiality constraints regarding third parties.

5.3. Malicious Allegations

If an investigation concludes that an individual has knowingly and maliciously made a false allegation for personal gain or malice, they may face disciplinary action up to and including

dismissal.

## 6. External Disclosure

If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, or if you have raised it internally and are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may raise your concern externally.

- **The Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW):** The CCEW is a prescribed person for appropriate disclosures relating to charity administration. They can be contacted via their official guidance for reporting serious wrongdoing.
- **Other Prescribed Bodies:** Depending on the nature of the concern, you may contact other prescribed bodies, such as the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). A full list is available on the UK government website.
- **The Whistleblowing Charity 'Protect':** You can seek free and confidential independent advice at any stage from **Protect** (formerly Public Concern at Work).

**Caution:** Disclosing information to the press or media is not typically a "protected disclosure" and may result in the loss of legal protection and/or disciplinary action.

## 6. External Advice and Disclosure

If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, you can seek advice or report externally:

- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line:** 0800 028 0285 | help@nspcc.org.uk
- **LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer):** For concerns about those working with children in Calderdale.
- **The Charity Commission:** Via their official 'Report a Serious Incident' portal.
- **Protect (The Whistleblowing Charity):** For free, confidential legal advice.
- **Police/Social Care:** In any case of immediate danger.

## 7. Record Keeping and Data Protection

### 7.1. Documentation

Noa's Place will maintain a secure record of all whistleblowing disclosures. This includes the initial report, the investigation process, the evidence gathered, and the final outcome.

### 7.2. Storage and Access

- **Confidentiality:** Access to whistleblowing records is restricted to the Investigating Officer and the Chair of Trustees.

- **Safeguarding Separation:** Disclosures related to safeguarding will be stored separately from general personnel files in a restricted-access digital vault.
- **Retention:** Records are retained for 7 years unless a legal or safeguarding reason requires a longer period.

## 8. Board Reporting and Oversight

- **Board Updates:** The CEO/Founder will report the number and nature of whistleblowing allegations (anonymised) to the Board at every quarterly meeting.
- **Annual Review:** The Board will review whistleblowing trends annually to improve our culture and safety.
- **Escalation:** If a concern involves the majority of the Board or the Chair, it should be reported directly to the Charity Commission.

## 9. Protection from Detriment

Anyone making a disclosure in good faith will be protected from any form of detrimental treatment. Retaliation is a serious disciplinary matter.

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