



## Whistleblowing and Dealing with Concerns Policy 2025 Edition

### 1. Introduction

Libra Children Services (LCS) is committed to openness, integrity and accountability. Volunteers, parents, carers and professionals who work with us are often best placed to recognise when practice falls short of expected standards or when something does not feel right. We want individuals to feel safe raising concerns, including suspicions of wrongdoing or breaches of policy, without fear of being treated unfairly.

This policy enables anyone connected with LCS to raise concerns internally so they can be addressed promptly and fairly. LCS will not tolerate retaliation against anyone who raises concerns in good faith.

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### 2. Purpose and Scope

This policy is designed to:

- provide a clear process for raising concerns that are not covered by complaints, grievances or disciplinary routes
- offer a safe and confidential way for volunteers, families, staff, members and external partners to report genuine concerns
- ensure individuals receive feedback on actions taken and understand how to escalate issues if they remain worried
- protect those who whistleblow in good faith from victimisation

Concerns raised under this policy may relate to issues such as:

- failure to follow LCS policies or procedures
  - poor practice or conduct that falls below expected standards
  - actions that place children, families, volunteers or staff at risk
  - safeguarding concerns
  - behaviour that damages the reputation of LCS
  - matters that may involve intervention from the police, local authority or safeguarding teams
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## 3. Encouraging a Safe Culture

LCS aims to create an environment where concerns can be voiced early, before issues become serious. We also undertake internal reviews to identify risks or weaknesses so that problems can be addressed proactively.

All concerns raised in good faith will be treated seriously.

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## 4. Protection from Harassment or Victimisation

Raising a concern can feel daunting. LCS recognises this and will take steps to protect anyone who comes forward. Harassment or victimisation of someone who has reported a concern will be treated as misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action.

If a volunteer or user feels they have been treated unfairly after raising a concern, they may use the relevant grievance or complaints procedures.

This protection does not prevent existing disciplinary processes from continuing if the individual was already under investigation.

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## 5. Confidentiality

LCS will make every effort to protect the identity of the person raising a concern. However, anonymity cannot always be guaranteed, particularly where safeguarding is involved or where the matter proceeds to formal investigation.

A whistleblower may be asked to provide a statement if required by investigating bodies.

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## 6. Anonymous Allegations

Anonymous concerns are more difficult to investigate but will not be dismissed automatically. LCS will consider the following when deciding how to proceed:

- seriousness of the matter
- credibility of the information
- likelihood of confirming the concern through other sources

Where possible, individuals are encouraged to identify themselves to support a more effective response.

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## 7. Malicious or Vexatious Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith but not upheld, no action will be taken against the whistleblower.

If an allegation is found to be deliberately false or malicious, LCS may take appropriate action in line with its disciplinary procedures.

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## 8. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should normally be raised with the:

- Contact Coordinator or Duty Coordinator
- Team Leader

If the concern involves one of these individuals or feels too sensitive to raise with them, the matter should be escalated to a member of the LCS management team or the Chair of the Board.

### Safeguarding-specific concerns

Concerns about the behaviour of a volunteer or staff member must be raised immediately with the safeguarding lead named in the LCS Safeguarding Policy.

If you believe a child is at risk of immediate harm, you should contact the police or the local authority children's services without delay.

### Providing information

Concerns are best submitted in writing. Include:

- a description of the issue
- names, dates or locations where relevant
- why the matter causes concern
- supporting information, if available

The whistleblower does not need to prove the allegation but should provide enough detail for initial enquiries.

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## 9. Initial Response

On receiving a concern, LCS will:

1. acknowledge the concern and provide a copy of this policy



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2. complete a preliminary review to establish whether immediate safeguarding action is required
  3. decide whether the issue should be addressed through the whistleblowing process or another route, such as complaints or disciplinary procedures
  4. determine whether external authorities need to be notified
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## 10. Investigation Process

LCS will appoint a **Deciding Officer** to oversee the investigation, supported by an impartial panel where necessary. The investigation will generally involve three stages:

### Stage 1 – Initial Consideration

The Deciding Officer reviews the concern, clarifies issues with the whistleblower and determines the approach to investigation.

### Stage 2 – Informal Meeting

A meeting may be arranged between the whistleblower, the presenting officer for LCS and the Deciding Officer.

The aim is to establish agreed facts, identify areas of disagreement and prepare for a formal review if required.

### Stage 3 – Formal Review

The presenting officer and whistleblower may provide written or verbal evidence.

The Deciding Officer and panel consider the evidence, ask further questions and make findings.

A written summary of conclusions and recommendations is provided to relevant parties.

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## 11. How LCS Will Respond

Depending on the concern, LCS may:

- refer immediately to the police or children's services
- resolve the issue quickly through discussion
- initiate internal disciplinary or complaints processes
- convene a full investigation panel
- implement policy, procedure or training changes if required

LCS will cooperate fully with statutory agencies where investigations fall under their remit.



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## 12. Principles for Conducting Investigations

Investigations will be:

- completed as promptly as possible, usually within one month unless complexity requires longer
- impartial and respectful to all involved
- focused on evidence rather than assumptions
- handled sensitively and confidentially
- designed to produce clear recommendations and learning for LCS

A copy of the investigation report will be shared with the whistleblower and appropriate senior staff.

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## 13. If the Matter Is Not Resolved

If a whistleblower feels that LCS has not handled their concern appropriately, they may escalate the matter to an external body such as:

- the relevant local authority children's services
- the police (where applicable)
- regulatory or accrediting bodies

Contact details for local authority safeguarding teams should be included in the LCS safeguarding policy appendices.

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## 14. Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, safeguarding guidance or organisational needs change.

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