**Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre**

**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 a suspicion of malpractice and wrongdoing.

Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with this commitment, we encourage employees, volunteers, service users and others with genuine concerns about any person linked with the Centre to come forward and raise those concerns.

The Whistleblowing Policy is for employees, volunteers, service users and outside agencies to raise concerns about the management / staff / volunteers of Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre and makes it clear that they can do so without fear of reprisals or victimisation. It is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise such concerns rather than overlooking the problem.

**Aims and Scope of the Policy**

Wherever possible, the Centre’s **Complaints Policy and Procedure** should befollowed for lodging a concern or complaint relating to Centre management, staff or volunteers. The Whistleblowing policy aims to:

* Provide an avenue for individuals to raise concerns where they consider the matter to be so serious that they cannot use the usual Complaints Policy.
* Allow individuals to take the matter further if they are dissatisfied with the initial outcome or response to their concern.
* Reassure people that steps will be taken to protect individuals raising concerns in good faith, from reprisals or victimisation.

It is intended to cover genuine concerns that fall outside the scope of other policies and procedures. This may include concerns about something that:

* Is contra to Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre’s policies, procedures or code of conduct.
* Falls below established standards and practice.
* Could be criminal activity
* Endangers health or safety, including risks to the public as well as children, colleagues and service users.
* Contributes to a safeguarding risk involving children in the care of Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre.

The policy will be made available to all employees, volunteers and service users.

**Harassment or Victimisation**

Melton Mowbray 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. Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect individuals who raise concerns in good faith. However, should anyone feel that they have suffered harassment, either directly or indirectly as a result of raising a concern, they should refer to the Complaints Policy.

**Confidentiality**

Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre will do its best to protect the identity of any individual who raises a concern. However, it must be appreciated that an investigation process may reveal the source of the concern and individuals who raise concerns may be required to provide a statement as part of the evidence.

**Anonymous Complaints / Allegations**

Individuals are strongly encouraged to put their name to any allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful. Anonymous allegations will be considered, with action taken at the discretion Melton Mowbray 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**

If an allegation is made in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against the individual making the allegation. If, however, the allegation is malicious or vexatious allegation, action (including disciplinary action for employees and volunteers) may be taken in accordance with the Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre policies and procedures.

**How to Raise a Concern**

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised 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 is believed to be involved. For example, if it’s believed that the Centre Co-ordinator or a Team Leader is involved, the concerns should be put in writing and sent directly to the Chair of the Child Contact Centre Management Committee, **c/o** **The Hope Centre, Nottingham Street, Melton Mowbray**

If the Chair of the Management Committee is believed to be involved, the concern should be raised with the Centre Co-ordinator or another member of the Management Committee. If this is not possible, the concern should be raised with the Chief Executive of NACCC.

In the case of Safeguarding concerns that may involve a member of staff or volunteer, the whistleblower should first consult with the MMCCC Co-ordinator. If the whistleblower feels that the Co-coordinator or the Management Committee may be involved, they should contact the NACCC Safeguarding Manager for advice. Individuals raising concerns can also contact their local authority Children’s Services Team for advice and assistance. Contact details are available at the end of this policy.

Concerns should ideally be raised in writing, setting out the background, giving names, dates, places and details of the situation. The earlier concerns are expressed, the easier it is for the Child Contact Centre, NACCC or your local authority Children’s Services Safeguarding Team to take action. Although individuals are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for initial enquiries to be made.

**How Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre will Respond**

The action taken by the Child Contact Centre will depend on the nature of the concern or allegation. The matter may:

* Be investigated internally within the Centre
* Be referred to NACCC and / or other external agency
* Be referred to the Police
* Any combination of these

Allegations referred directly to NACCC or Children’s Services will be dealt with in accordance with that organisation’s policies and procedures. Any person who is the subject of a complaint or allegation should, at the appropriate times be given details of the matter in order to respond. To ensure fairness, 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 policies and procedures.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for a formal investigation. If the matter cannot be resolved informally or it is considered that a formal investigation is required, the following steps will be followed:

* Melton Mowbray Child Contact Centre will acknowledge receipt of the complaint or allegation in writing (either by letter or email) within 7 days.
* Once the investigation has been concluded, a formal written response will be provided within 7 days, whilst respecting the confidentiality of individuals involved.

**How to Take the Matter Further**

If the matter has not been dealt with in a manner which is deemed to be satisfactory to the whistleblower or others involved, they can contact NACCC directly as follows:

**National Association of Child Contact Centres**

5 Russell Place

Nottingham

NG1 5HJ

Telephone: 0115 948 4557

Email: contact@naccc.org.uk

There is also an online contact form on the NACCC website: www.naccc.org.uk

For safeguarding concerns.

**Leicestershire County Council’s First Response Children’s Duty Team**

Telephone: 0116 305 0005 (24 hour)

www.leicestershire.gov.uk

**Reviewed:** October 2024