



OUTREACH • BARN • FARM • POST 16

Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Note

For the purposes of this policy, Orchard Therapeutic Farm (OTF), Orchard Therapeutic Outreach (OTO), Orchard Therapeutic Barn (OTB) and Orchard Therapeutic Active (OTA) will together be referred to as “**the Services**”

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, and contractors of the Services, as well as anyone representing Orchard Therapeutic Farm, Orchard Therapeutic Outreach, Orchard Therapeutic Barn and Orchard Therapeutic Active in an official capacity.

Policy Statement

The Services are committed to operating with openness, transparency, honesty and integrity. Staff play a crucial role in keeping children and young people safe, and it is essential that they feel able to raise concerns without fear of repercussion.

Whistleblowing is when an employee raises a concern in the public interest about:

- malpractice
- unsafe or dangerous practice
- safeguarding concerns
- breaches of professional conduct
- risks to the welfare of children
- criminal, unethical or illegal behaviour



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- attempts to conceal wrongdoing

This policy reflects the expectations of:

- **The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)**
- **Ofsted’s expectations for Alternative Provision**
- national “Freedom to Speak Up” principles

The Services are committed to ensuring all staff feel confident they can raise concerns, be heard, be supported, and be protected.

Key Principles

Principle	How this applies to Whistleblowing
I feel safe and secure where I study and in my wider environment.	Employees raise concerns regarding malpractice, risks to young people and unethical or illegal acts keep the young people in our services safe and secure.
I have strong, trusting, and meaningful relationships within my support system and can rely on the adults around me.	Promoting an open and transparent culture in which staff feel comfortable raising concerns not only builds trust between staff but also between staff and young people, building a support system they can rely on.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Code of Conduct

- Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy
- Compliments & Complaints Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

Policy Statement

The policy should be read and used alongside *The Services' Compliments and Complaints Procedures* and *Allegations Against Staff Member Policy*. The Services recognizes that 'whistleblowing' is distinct from a complaint in that 'whistleblowers' by definition raise their concerns as employees. Complaints about the service are raised by young people, others acting on their behalf or members of the public. However, it is recognised that similar procedures should be followed to respond to complaints and whistleblowing.

Definition

Whistleblowing is when a member of staff raises a concern that they reasonably believe shows wrongdoing or the concealment of wrongdoing. The concern may relate to something that:

- has happened
- is happening now
- could happen in the future

Whistleblowing is **not** the same as:

- a personal grievance
- a disagreement with management
- a complaint about workload or working conditions



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Introduction

The Services recognise that staff are often the first to identify early signs of risk, unsafe practice or cultural problems. It is therefore essential that:

- staff feel safe to speak up
- concerns are taken seriously and acted upon quickly
- whistleblowers are protected
- concerns are used to drive improvement
- there is a strong safeguarding culture across all sites

Promoting openness and a willingness to challenge ensures the Services continue to model best practice, remain child-centred and operate in line with all statutory guidance.

Guiding Principles

The Services will:

- promote a culture of openness where concerns can be raised without fear
- take all concerns seriously, no matter how small they may seem
- act quickly and proportionately to investigate concerns
- protect staff who raise concerns in good faith
- ensure whistleblowers do not suffer detriment
- challenge any attempt to discourage or intimidate someone who raises a concern

Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, staff who raise concerns in good faith are legally protected.

Legal Frameworks

Whistleblowers must:

- reasonably believe they are acting in the public interest
- raise the concern with the appropriate person or body



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- be an employee, worker or contractor

PIDA protects staff from:

- dismissal
- victimisation
- bullying or retaliation
- negative changes to their role or conditions

Volunteers are not covered by PIDA but will receive the *same organisational protection* within the Services.

Duty of Candour

In line with national expectations for education and care organisations, the Services promote complete honesty when:

- mistakes occur
- harm or potential harm is identified
- safeguarding risks are discovered
- unsafe practice is witnessed

Staff must:

- report concerns immediately
- cooperate with investigations
- be open and transparent
- notify young people (or professionals) when something affects their safety or support

This openness strengthens trust and accountability.



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Whistleblowing Procedures

Who to Report To

Staff should raise concerns with any of the following:

- 1. Immediate Line Manager**
- 2. Centre Manager- Kim Cook**
- 3. DSL / Deputy DSL – Alex Smith**
- 4. CEO – Ludivine Parmentier**

If the concern involves these individuals, staff may go directly to:

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Jo Lloyd

lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01865 810 603

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

0800 028 0285

What Staff Should Report

- safeguarding concerns
- unsafe behaviour or reduced supervision
- staff misconduct
- data breaches
- physical, emotional or verbal abuse
- bullying or intimidation
- misuse of organisational resources
- health and safety risks
- illegal activity
- falsifying records
- failure to follow procedures
- concerns about cultural issues or harmful practice

When a Concern is Raised

The manager receiving the concern will:



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1. Acknowledge the concern
2. Record what has been reported
3. Decide the appropriate next steps
4. Inform the whistleblower how the concern will be managed
5. Refer immediately to safeguarding where required
6. Maintain confidentiality

If immediate risk is identified, safeguarding procedures will begin **without delay**.

Investigation

- All concerns will be investigated objectively and professionally
 - Whistleblowers will not be asked to prove wrongdoing – only to raise the concern
 - The Services may speak to witnesses, review documents, or seek external advice
 - The whistleblower will receive feedback where legally and confidentially appropriate
 - Action will be taken proportionate to the findings
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Protection for Whistleblowers

The Services will:

- protect staff from victimisation
- challenge or discipline anyone who intimidates or retaliates
- support staff who raise concerns
- adjust duties if needed to keep them safe
- facilitate external reporting if internal routes are exhausted

Malicious or knowingly false allegations may lead to disciplinary action.

Freedom to Speak Up Principles

1. A culture where concerns are welcomed
 2. Leaders model openness and transparency
 3. Staff are supported to raise concerns early
 4. No fear of retaliation
 5. Clear reporting routes
 6. Proper investigation and feedback
 7. Training provided
 8. Concerns used to drive improvement
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Training

- Whistleblowing training forms part of all new staff induction
 - Refresher training will be provided when policies or legislation change
 - Staff receive regular reminders of routes to raise concerns
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Monitoring and Review

The Centre Manager will ensure this policy is implemented effectively and that all concerns raised are handled in line with procedures.

The policy will be reviewed:

- annually
- after serious incidents
- after updates to legislation
- following whistleblowing trends or concerns

Staff are encouraged to suggest improvements to this policy at any time.

After Reading This Policy, You Should Be Able To:

- Understand what whistleblowing is and how it protects children
- Know when and how to raise a concern



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- Understand the difference between a complaint, grievance and whistleblowing
- Recognise your responsibility to report unsafe practice
- Know who to contact inside and outside the Services

If you are unsure, speak to your Line Manager, Centre Manager or the CEO.

Policy Review

A Director will review this policy at least once a year to make any updates needed.

Authorisation and Signature

This Policy is the authorised version agreed by the Directors of The Services. All employees are expected to follow this policy and failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

Ludivine Parmentier

Chief Executive Officer