



## BIG SIS C.I.C. SAFEGUARDING WHISTLEBLOWING PROCEDURES

<b>Policy comes into force:</b>	1st of March 2023
<b>Review period:</b>	1 year
<b>Next review:</b>	1st of March 2024

### What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when **someone reports wrongdoing** on the basis that it is in the public interest for the wrongdoing to be brought to light. This is usually something they've seen at work but not always. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistleblower is concerned may happen in the near future (Gov.uk, 2019).

### Complaints and whistleblowing

If you are worried that your organisation or another organisation is not responding to or sharing child protection information appropriately, it's vital that you share your concerns to keep children safe.

Legislation across the UK ensures that you shouldn't be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle' (Gov.uk, 2018).

In **England, Scotland and Wales**, whistleblowers are protected by law under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

## Introduction

Under *section 11 of the Children Act 2004*, Big Sis C.I.C. has a duty to demonstrate that it has effective arrangements in place within our organisation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

Big Sis C.I.C. expects all staff, temporary staff, volunteers, students, contractors or external partner agencies working with children and young people, to express any concerns that they may have with regards to the conduct of any individuals. The term ‘*staff*’ will hereafter include all of the wider workforce, as described above.

Big Sis C.I.C. is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. All persons working for, or with this organisation, must feel safe and supported in order to express their concerns.

This policy document is intended to encourage and enable all our staff to raise their concerns and to do so without fear of victimisation or discrimination. It does not replace the Complaints Procedure or the [Safeguarding Policy](#) or the organisation’s standard procedures for reporting allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers.

This document is supplementary to the organisation’s Whistleblowing Policy in regards to other forms of malpractice covered under the ‘*Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998*’.

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (PIDA) protects the public interest by providing a remedy for individuals who suffer workplace reprisal for raising a genuine concern, whether it is a concern about child safeguarding and welfare systems, financial malpractice, danger, illegality, or other wrongdoing. The concern may relate to something that is happening or has happened in the past. The PIDA covers all workers, including temporary agency staff. It does not cover the self-employed or volunteers.

The Act also provides protection should individuals have difficulty gaining a reference from an employer because they have raised a concern. It makes it clear that any clause in a contract that purports to gag an individual from raising a concern that would be protected under the Act is void.

## **Aims of this policy**

This policy aims to:

- Encourage adults working for or within the organisation to feel confident in raising concerns;
- Provide a process by which concerns can be raised and dealt with;
- Receive feedback on the process (where appropriate); and
- Provide a means by which staff can receive support where concerns have been raised.

## **What does this policy cover?**

This policy is designed to cover concerns that staff have about the conduct of individuals in a position of trust within the organisation which could be detrimental to the safety or wellbeing of young people and where staff, for whatever reason, feel unable to raise them under the organisation's standard child protection procedures around dealing with such allegations. It includes issues about:

- Unprofessional behaviour
- Bullying by staff
- Any form of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect)
- Name calling
- Personal contact with children and young people which is contrary to the organisations policies and codes of conduct
- Any form of racial abuse
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- Knowledge about an individual's personal circumstances which may indicate they could be a risk to children or unsuitable to work with children

Please be mindful that these are examples of concerns, and are not exhaustive.

## **Safeguarding against harassment or victimisation**

Big Sis C.I.C. is committed to professional standards and to supporting staff. It is recognised that the decision to report a concern is a difficult one to make. Harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated and Big Sis C.I.C. will take appropriate action in order to protect the person raising the concern when they are acting in good faith.

## **Confidentiality**

All concerns will be treated in confidence, however, there may be a need for the whistleblower to give evidence e.g. if they have witnessed a crime or in regard to disciplinary procedures if this is the outcome.

### **Anonymous allegations**

This policy encourages staff to raise concerns to be identified in doing so as part of their professional role/responsibility. However, anonymous allegations will be investigated as thoroughly as possible.

### **False allegations**

If staff raise a concern in good faith which is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken. However, if a concern is raised maliciously, disciplinary action may be taken.

## **How to raise a concern**

Staff should normally raise their concerns with a designated manager under Big Sis C.I.C.'s standard procedures for dealing with allegations about a person in a position of trust. If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the subject of concern, the matter should be referred to a more senior member of management or, if this is not possible, the Whistleblowing Policy can be implemented.

Under standard procedures, if there are concerns that an adult working with children may have abused a child, or be unsuitable to work with children and young people, concerns will be passed to the *Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)* by the manager.

[For further information about the LADO process, please use the following link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/child-protection/managing-allegations-against-adults-working-with-children>]

In certain circumstances, staff may feel they are unable to follow the organisation's standard procedures e.g. because they feel their position in the organisation would be in jeopardy, they would be subject to intimidation, or that the person of concern is the designated manager to whom they should report such matters and there is no one senior to refer to. They should then follow the Whistleblowing Policy by contacting a nominated person (the 'responsible person') within the organisation or an umbrella organisation to which the organisation is affiliated.

The Policy may also be used in circumstances when the matter has been raised under appropriate organisation procedures for referring child protection concerns, but the referrer considers that the manager has not taken the concerns seriously or acted appropriately with relation to them. In such circumstances, referrers are encouraged to contact the named responsible person for 'whistleblowing' for the organisation or a LADO directly for discussion and advice.

The **LADO** contact details are listed at the end of this policy. When following the Whistleblowing Policy, concerns may be shared verbally, but should also be recorded in writing.

Staff may wish to invite their trade union representative to be present during any subsequent interviews.

## How Big Sis C.I.C. will respond

Any concern regarding child protection will be referred to external agencies for investigation (children's social services, police, LADO).

### **If the concern is not of this nature there will be:**

- Investigation by management
- Disciplinary process if appropriate
- Consideration of policies, processes and procedures if such issues arise from the investigation.

Within **10 working days** of a concern being raised the referrer will receive a written response from the responsible person which will:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received;
- Supply information on relevant support mechanisms;
- Advise whether further investigations will take place; or
- Advise that no further action has taken place and why.

## Who to contact

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead contact details**

#### **Designated Safeguarding Lead for Big Sis C.I.C:**

Name: Friederike Kunze (Big Sis Director)

Phone/email: [hello@big-sis.co](mailto:hello@big-sis.co) // +44 7714 014760

## Other Agencies

If it is felt that it would be unsafe for any reason to share concerns with the named person from Big Sis C.I.C., the following are appropriate contacts with whom to discuss your concerns:

### Devon County Council

Individual designated agency leads for Child Protection. Ask for the **LADO** if your concerns are that a member of staff could be harming children.

### Plymouth-specific contact number and email address

Plymouth Gateway Service

Tel: 01752 668000

Select Children's Services – Option 1

Email: [gateway@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:gateway@plymouth.gov.uk)

### Other support

Recognised trade unions or professional associations can provide support and assistance or independent, external advice. This can be obtained from the charity Public Concern at Work.

- Regulatory bodies such as Ofsted also have 'whistleblowing' hotlines:
- Ofsted's whistleblowing hotline: 0300 123 3155 // [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk).
- Public Concern at Work Helpline: 020 7404 6609 // [helpline@pcaw.co.uk](mailto:helpline@pcaw.co.uk)
- Protect, Speak Up, Stop Harm: 020 3117 2520; <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

### NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

Contact Number: 0800 028 0285 || Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)