

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Childcare Services

Whistle Blowing Policy

It is the duty of staff to disclose or express any concerns in relation to the conduct of a colleague (permanent or student) which may prove detrimental to the health, well-being, safety or development of any child using Childcare Services at Queen's and covers such things as:

- Sexual, physical or verbal abuse of children, parents, staff or any other behaviour which a member of staff genuinely finds unacceptable or inappropriate
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Breaches of procedures
- Health and safety risks, including risks to children, the public and staff
- Possible fraud or corruption
- Conduct which a member of staff may consider to be a criminal offence
- Environmental risks
- Other unethical conduct
- The deliberate concealing of information relating to any of the above matters

Any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of their employment can be reported under this Policy to any member of the Childcare Management Team.

These procedures are in addition to any other statutory reporting procedures that may be applicable.

Protection

Staff can speak up without fear of harassment, victimisation, informal pressure, discrimination or disadvantage. There will be no 'come back' if a member of staff reasonable believes that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

How to Raise a Concern

The procedure seeks to encourage and enable individuals to disclose information through appropriate channels first, rather than going directly to an outside person or body.

As a first step, concerns should normally be raised with one of the Managers. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of any wrongdoing. Childcare Managers conduct six weekly supervisions for members of staff. Meetings are confidential and staff can raise any concerns or issues. In addition, the Childcare Management Team operate an "Open Door" policy to allow staff every opportunity to discuss any concerns or disclosure.

Staff can also raise concerns with the Head of Childcare Services or can seek help and advice externally with:

- Early Years Service: 028 95 042811
- The Gateway Team (Saintfield Road) 9.00am-5.00pm: 028 90 507000
- Regional Emergency Social Work Service: 028 95 049999

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are advised to set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places, where possible, and the reasons for making the disclosure. This will make the investigation easier to complete.

Although a member of staff is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of the allegation, they will need to demonstrate that they have an honest and reasonable suspicion that malpractice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

Procedure

Childcare Services will respond to any concerns raised. In order to protect both any member of staff who raises a concern and anyone accused of wrong-doing, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required this will be taken before any investigation is conducted. Staff will be told how Childcare Services proposes to deal with a concern within ten working days of the concern being brought to Management's attention.

Confidentiality

All concerns will be treated with confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal a staff member's identity, if they so wish. However, while making all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the matter as a whole, at a certain stage in the investigation it will be necessary to make the origin of the complaint known to the person or persons the allegations concern. All concerns raised within the remit of the procedure will be assessed to determine if the confidentiality extends to withholding the name of the complainant. There shall be a substantial reason for doing so, such as a real risk of personal harm. Complainants should be aware however, that their identity may be revealed by inference.

Untrue Allegations

Childcare Services accepts that deciding to report a concern can be very difficult and uncomfortable.

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against him/her. If, however, a member of staff makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously, or for professional gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

University Whistle Blowing Policy

Information on the University's Whistle Blowing Policy is available at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/Discover/About-Queens/Leadership-and-structure/Registrars-Office/Policies/>