

WHISTLE BLOWING (ALSO KNOWN AS CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING)

- Policy and Procedure for Foster Carers



1. The Policy

- 1.1 Normally concerns that you may have about the conduct of Foster Care Link, members of its staff or other foster carers, will be dealt with informally by your social worker or through the Agency's Complaints Procedure. There may be however be an occasion when you have a serious concern that falls outside the scope of the Complaints Procedure or any other procedures.
- 1.2 It is important that you feel able to voice any concerns you have on a confidential basis and without fear of subsequent victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage. This is based on the presumption that any disclosure is made in good faith. It is also important that your concerns are investigated by the appropriate people and not by an approach to the media. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.
- 1.3 Concerns covered by this policy include:
- Conduct which is an offence or breach of the law
 - Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
 - Health and safety risks to colleagues or members of the public
 - Damage to the environment
 - The unauthorised use of public funds
 - Suspected fraud and corruption
 - Abuse or neglect of clients or colleagues
 - Other unethical conduct
- 1.4 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal your identity. You should be aware however that any subsequent investigation of your concern, could lead to the person(s) against whom you raised the concern, facing disciplinary proceedings or court proceedings. Under these circumstances you may be required to come forward as a witness.

2. The Procedure

- 2.1 As a first step you should normally raise concerns with your fostering social worker or their line manager. This will depend however on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who you suspect of malpractice. If you feel unable to raise the matter with your social worker or their line manager, you can contact following people:

Children Act Enterprises Tel: 01883 348340

You may also want to seek advice from The Fostering Network Helpline, Tel: 020-6720-2100

Ofsted Helpline Tel: 08456 404040

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- 2.2 While you are not expected to prove beyond reasonable doubt, the truth of any allegation, you should be able to demonstrate to the person contacted, that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.
- 2.3 Where there are considered reasonable grounds for your concern the Agency will:
 - conduct an investigation, by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process or
 - where appropriate refer the matter to the police, an external auditor or set up an independent inquiry.
- 2.4 Where an initial examination of your concern, concludes that it falls within existing procedures, (for example child protection or discrimination issues) the matter will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.
- 2.5 Within 10 working days of your concern being raised you will receive a written acknowledgement. This will also indicate how the matter will be dealt with, give an estimate of how long it will take for a final response and seek your views on whether or not you feel you need independent support during this process.
- 2.6 You will be notified in writing of the outcome of any investigation. If you remain concerned and feel that the matter has not been properly investigated, you should contact Ofsted who regulate the Agency. You can obtain the name, address and telephone number for your local Ofsted office from your telephone directory or online at: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- 2.7 If you consider that you have been victimised or discriminated against as a result of raising a concern, you may complain using Foster Care Link's complaints procedure or by contacting Ofsted.