

Whistleblowing and Safer Recruitment

Little Lanes Out of School Club | October 2026

Purpose and responsibilities

Little Lanes protects children by recruiting suitable people and making it safe to report concerns. This policy applies to employees, managers, volunteers, students and temporary staff. Management oversees recruitment and responds to concerns; everyone must report unsafe practice promptly. Read this with the Safeguarding, Staff Behaviour and Code of Conduct, Grievance, Disciplinary and Data Protection policies.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing means reporting suspected wrongdoing in the public interest. Examples include unsafe childcare, abuse or neglect, fraud, crime, breach of legal duties, environmental harm, sexual harassment or concealment of wrongdoing. A concern can relate to something that has happened, is happening or is likely to happen. Proof is not required before reporting a reasonable concern.

A personal employment complaint will usually follow the grievance procedure, but it may also involve whistleblowing or safeguarding. We will identify the appropriate routes without rejecting a concern because the person used the wrong label. Discrimination or harassment must not be excluded automatically from this policy.

How to raise a concern

- Speak to Megan Garratt or raise the concern in writing. The Club email is littlelanesoosc@hotmail.com; do not use a shared inbox if someone implicated may access it. Ask for a private conversation instead.
- If the concern involves Megan, or you do not feel able to approach her, speak directly to Cheri Garratt on 07950 875097. If either person is implicated, has a conflict of interest or cannot act independently, use the external routes on the next page.
- Explain what happened, when and where, who was involved and why you are concerned. Give factual information and identify anything you did not witness yourself. Preserve relevant records lawfully; do not conduct your own investigation or access information without authority.
- Verbal and anonymous reports are accepted. A named confidential report may make follow-up easier, but anonymity is not a reason to disregard a concern.
- You may seek independent advice or report to the appropriate external body without completing internal stages first. Do not delay urgent safeguarding action while waiting for a meeting or written response.

Protection and confidentiality

The Club will not tolerate retaliation, intimidation or disadvantage against someone who raises a concern honestly and reasonably, including where it is not substantiated. Report any retaliation through these routes. Statutory protection depends on the legal conditions, including reasonable belief, public interest and the recipient of the disclosure; volunteers may not have the same statutory employment protections, but our no-retaliation commitment includes them.

Information will be restricted to those who need it. We cannot promise absolute confidentiality: identity or evidence may need to be shared for safeguarding, a fair investigation or legal proceedings. Explain this wherever possible. Deliberately fabricated allegations may be addressed through fair disciplinary procedures; an unproven or mistaken concern is not, by itself, malicious.

Responding and external reporting

What management will do

- Listen, record the concern securely and assess immediate risks. Take protective action and make safeguarding or other referrals without delay.
- Allocate the matter to someone without a conflict of interest. Where necessary, obtain independent advice or external investigation. Coordinate with statutory agencies and avoid compromising their enquiries.
- Acknowledge the concern as soon as practicable and explain the next steps. Aim to provide a response or meaningful progress update within ten working days; if more time is needed, explain why and give a further update date. This is a Club target, not a reason to delay protection.
- Keep the reporter informed as far as confidentiality permits. Explain the outcome, action or reason for no further action, and how to raise unresolved concerns externally. Do not promise access to confidential personnel or child records.
- Review the underlying practice and check for retaliation. Retain factual records and decisions securely under the Club's retention arrangements.

Sexual harassment

Unwanted sexual conduct can be reported under this policy, including conduct by colleagues, parents, contractors or visitors. Management will take reports seriously, assess risk, protect those affected and use an appropriate independent reporting route where a manager is implicated. We take preventive steps through clear standards, training, risk assessment and action on concerns.

From 6 April 2026, sexual harassment is expressly included among qualifying whistleblowing disclosures. Legal protection still depends on the applicable conditions. Seek independent advice where needed. The Club will review this policy against the further harassment-law changes scheduled for 30 October 2026 rather than treating future duties as already in force.

Choose the appropriate external route

Concern or support needed	Contact or action
Immediate danger or serious emergency	Police / ambulance: 999. Non-emergency police: 101.
A child may be at risk of harm	Follow the Safeguarding Policy and contact Hertfordshire Children's Services: 0300 123 4043. Staff may refer directly.
Allegation about an adult working with children	Use the Hertfordshire LADO referral route in the Safeguarding Policy. Contact promptly; do not investigate first. LADO is not the general route for employment or financial complaints.
Concerns about the childcare provider	Ofsted: 0300 123 4666; enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk . Explain that you are reporting a concern about a registered childcare setting.
Independent child-protection whistleblowing advice	NSPCC: 0800 028 0285; help@nspcc.org.uk .
Independent whistleblowing advice	Protect: 020 3117 2520; protect-advice.org.uk .
Other wrongdoing	Seek advice on the appropriate prescribed regulator, such as HSE, ICO or HMRC, according to the concern.

External reporting does not require management permission. Avoid posting allegations or confidential records on social media; wider public disclosures have different legal protection conditions. Keep current local safeguarding contacts with this policy.

Safer recruitment

Planning and selection

Management defines the role, duties, required competence and safeguarding responsibilities before advertising. Applicants receive a job description, person specification, application form and safeguarding information. Recruitment information explains that appointment depends on satisfactory suitability checks. Use consistent selection criteria, make reasonable adjustments for applicants and assess suitability fairly. At least one person involved in recruitment should have appropriate safer recruitment training.

Megan Garratt is booked onto a safer recruitment course. Completion will be recorded in her training record, and relevant learning will be used to review the Club's recruitment procedures.

Obtain an application covering identity, employment and education history, relevant experience and referees; a CV alone is not sufficient. Obtain a confidential, role-appropriate self-disclosure of relevant suitability matters through a secure route. Ask only for information legally disclosable for the role; do not request protected convictions or cautions. Discuss relevant information fairly with the applicant. Explore gaps, unexplained changes and inconsistencies at interview. Ask practical safeguarding and professional-boundary questions as well as assessing childcare skills. Record the reasons for selection. Any visit or trial must be supervised and must not give an unchecked applicant responsibility for children.

References before recruitment

Obtain references before recruiting staff, students or volunteers. Request them directly from verified sources, including the current employer, training or education setting, and the most recent employer involving work with children where applicable. The Club normally seeks two referees; this is a Club safeguard, not a claim that EYFS specifies two in every case.

Do not accept references from relatives or open testimonials supplied by the applicant as substitutes. Check the referee's authority and authenticity, including electronic responses. Ask about suitability to work with children and reason for leaving. Compare the response with the application and resolve gaps or concerns before confirming appointment. If standard referees are genuinely unavailable, management seeks advice, records the reason and obtains reliable alternatives consistent with EYFS; it does not simply waive the requirement.

Checks before taking up childcare duties

- Verify identity, right to work and relevant qualifications or training. Confirm the role requirements for this school-age wraparound provision rather than assuming nursery qualification rules apply to every post.
- Obtain the appropriate enhanced DBS check and children's barred-list information where the role is legally eligible. A school DBS or a certificate alone does not establish suitability for this role.
- Where using the DBS Update Service, obtain consent, check identity and the original certificate, confirm the correct workforce and level, and record the status check. Obtain a new check where needed.
- Consider overseas residence or work and obtain appropriate additional evidence or overseas checks. Assess any unavailable information and seek advice; do not assume a UK DBS covers overseas history.
- Check relevant childcare disqualification requirements and declarations. Do not appoint a barred or disqualified person to prohibited work; any lawful waiver must be in place where applicable. Ask only for criminal-record information the Club is entitled to receive, respecting filtering rules.
- Consider ability to perform the role safely and any reasonable adjustments, using lawful, proportionate health enquiries at the appropriate stage. Do not treat disability or medication alone as evidence of unsuitability.

Management records a suitability decision and signs off required checks before independent childcare duties begin. Anyone whose suitability has not been confirmed must never have unsupervised contact with children. The Club does not use a supervised start to bypass required references or other mandatory checks. Seek advice before any exceptional arrangement.

Induction and ongoing suitability

Before and during the first sessions

Provide a written conditional offer and employment terms, and retain the agreed contract on the staff file. The manager identifies a supervisor and completes a recorded induction. Explain the role, supervision arrangements, emergency procedures, reporting routes and professional boundaries. Staff receive the Safeguarding Policy and read the policies relevant to their duties. Record completion on the staff policy and training checklist, including Little Lanes training and the assigned Keeping Children Safe in Education reading.

Safeguarding training must meet current EYFS requirements and staff must know how to report concerns about children or adults, including managers. Check first-aid certificates and ensure the session has the required paediatric first-aid cover. Do not give a worker medication, food handling or other specialist responsibilities before the necessary briefing and competence checks.

Volunteers students and agency staff

Apply suitability and reference requirements to volunteers and students according to their role and the EYFS. Agree supervision and do not leave children alone with anyone whose suitability is unconfirmed. For agency staff, obtain written confirmation of the required checks, verify identity on arrival and resolve any gaps before deployment. Give a local safeguarding and emergency briefing; agency checks do not replace it. Visitors and contractors follow the Visitors Policy and are not treated as checked childcare staff.

Continuing checks and supervision

- Use probation, supervision and regular discussion to identify support, training needs or conduct concerns early. Review ongoing suitability and record an annual declaration as a Club procedure.
- Staff must promptly disclose relevant changes affecting suitability, including applicable criminal matters, disqualification, safeguarding restrictions or circumstances affecting safe work. Do not wait for an annual declaration.
- Management assesses new information promptly, seeks appropriate advice and changes duties or supervision where needed to protect children while matters are resolved. A DBS certificate is not a guarantee of continuing suitability.
- Keep a recruitment and suitability record showing checks, dates, outcomes, who checked them, relevant qualifications, references and the DBS certificate number and date. Protect sensitive material; keep DBS certificate copies only where justified under current DBS and data-protection guidance.
- When providing references, give accurate, fair information in accordance with EYFS and data-protection requirements. Do not include unfounded, false or malicious allegations; seek advice about safeguarding information that should lawfully be shared.

Allegations and referrals

Concerns about an adult's conduct are managed under the Safeguarding Policy, including low-level concerns, LADO involvement and Ofsted notifications where required. Internal processes, resignation or an agreed departure must not prevent statutory safeguarding action. Refer to DBS when the legal referral conditions are met, including where a person is removed from regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left, because the relevant harm criteria apply.

Approval and review

Adopted by: Little Lanes Out of School Club

Date approved: October 2026 Review date: October 2027

Signed: MG Name and role: Megan Garratt - Manager

Review annually and sooner following legal changes, incidents or changes to recruitment arrangements. Review the harassment section for the changes scheduled on 30 October 2026.

Sources: DfE EYFS group and school-based framework, effective September 2026; GOV.UK whistleblowing guidance for employers and Ofsted complaints procedure; Acas whistleblowing and sexual harassment guidance; DBS eligibility, Update Service and referral guidance.

Useful links: gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2 | gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-guidance-for-employers | acas.org.uk/whistleblowing-at-work | gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service