WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Effective date	1 September 2026	**Next review**	1 September 2027
Policy owner	Christopher Dickinson	**Role**	Designated Safeguarding Lead / Director

1. Policy statement

Impact Wrap Around Care is committed to a culture of safeguarding, openness and accountability. Staff must be able to raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or poor safeguarding practice without fear of detriment. Concerns will be listened to, recorded, considered promptly and acted on appropriately.

This policy supports the safeguarding and welfare requirements applying to registered childcare and should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Allegations Against Staff / LADO procedure, Complaints Policy and Staff Supervision arrangements.

2. Purpose and legal framework

Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing in the public interest. A qualifying worker may be protected by law when making a protected disclosure under the Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

For childcare practice, the setting follows the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework in force from 1 September 2026, applicable Childcare Register requirements, Ofsted regulation and enforcement guidance, and local safeguarding procedures.

3. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to employees, agency workers, contractors, volunteers, students and others working for or on behalf of Impact Wrap Around Care. It may be used to raise concerns about conduct by any member of staff, manager, volunteer, contractor or other person connected with the provision.

4. What concerns should be raised

A concern should be raised where a person reasonably believes that wrongdoing, unsafe practice or a failure to safeguard may have occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur. Examples include:

- a child being harmed, placed at risk of harm, abused or neglected;
- unsafe or inappropriate conduct by a member of staff, including breaches of professional boundaries;
- a failure to follow safeguarding, supervision, staffing, suitability, health and safety or welfare procedures;
- covering up, ignoring or failing to report a safeguarding concern;
- criminal activity, fraud, bribery, corruption or misuse of funds;
- a serious breach of legal or regulatory requirements;
- deliberate concealment of any of the above.

A whistleblower does not need to prove the concern. The person should have a genuine and reasonable belief that the information is substantially true and is raising it in the public interest.

5. Internal reporting procedure

Concerns should normally be raised as soon as possible with:

- Christopher Dickinson - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Director.

Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing. Staff should provide as much factual information as possible, including dates, people involved, witnesses and any immediate risk to children. Where a concern is raised verbally, the person receiving it will make a written record and confirm the substance of the concern with the whistleblower.

If the concern involves Christopher Dickinson, if it would be inappropriate to raise the matter internally, or if the whistleblower believes the concern has not been dealt with properly, the matter should be raised externally using section 8 of this policy.

6. Safeguarding allegations and immediate action

Any concern that a person working with children has harmed a child, may have harmed a child, may have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may not be suitable to work with children must be treated as a safeguarding allegation and referred in line with the setting safeguarding procedure and Kent LADO/LESAS arrangements.

The setting will not carry out its own full investigation into an allegation before taking advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO/LESAS) where the harm threshold may be met. Immediate action will focus on protecting children, preserving evidence and making the required referrals or notifications.

If a child is in immediate danger or a crime is in progress, call 999. Welfare concerns about an individual child must be referred through Kent Children's Services / Front Door in line with local safeguarding procedures.

7. How concerns will be handled

- The concern will be acknowledged and recorded promptly.
- The DSL/Director will assess immediate safeguarding risk and decide what referrals, notifications or protective actions are required.
- The whistleblower may be asked for further information but will not be expected to investigate the matter personally.
- The setting will keep an appropriate confidential record of the concern, decisions, actions, referrals and outcome.
- The whistleblower will be told, where lawful and appropriate, that the matter has been considered and whether action has been taken. Confidential information about other individuals may not be shared.

8. External reporting and escalation

Staff may raise concerns externally where internal reporting is inappropriate, has not resolved the concern, or where there is an immediate safeguarding or regulatory issue.

Kent LADO / LESAS

For allegations about a person who works with children, use the Kent Integrated Children's Services Portal to submit a LADO referral. For clarification about whether a LADO referral is required, use the LESAS enquiry route. Parent/carer referrals can also be sent to lesasenquiries@kent.gov.uk.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Telephone: 0800 028 0285. This independent advice line supports workers who have concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their organisation.

Ofsted

In 2026, Ofsted is not yet a prescribed person for whistleblowing disclosures. However, staff can complain to Ofsted if they believe the setting is not meeting regulatory requirements. Ofsted can be contacted at CIE@ofsted.gov.uk and through its published complaints procedure. Ofsted is expected to become a prescribed person for whistleblowing in 2027.

Other prescribed persons

Depending on the subject of the concern, a worker may make a protected disclosure to another prescribed person or body listed by the UK Government. The Children's Commissioner for England is a prescribed person for matters relating to the rights, welfare or interests of children.

9. Ofsted notifications

Where a matter is a significant event affecting the provision, the registered provider will notify Ofsted as soon as possible and always within 14 days, in accordance with current reporting requirements. From 1 September 2026, this includes allegations of harm by anyone living, working or looking after children on the premises, where applicable.

Making an Ofsted notification does not replace any duty to contact the LADO/LESAS, Children's Services, police, DBS or another agency where required.

10. Confidentiality and anonymous concerns

The setting will treat whistleblowing information sensitively and will only share it on a need-to-know basis or where disclosure is required for safeguarding, legal or regulatory reasons. A whistleblower may request that their identity is kept confidential; absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if disclosure is necessary to protect a child, investigate fairly or comply with law.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, particularly where there is a safeguarding risk, but anonymity can make it harder to obtain further information or provide feedback.

11. Protection from detriment

No person who raises a genuine concern in good faith and in the public interest will be subjected to dismissal, disciplinary action, harassment, victimisation or other detriment because they raised the concern. Any retaliatory behaviour will itself be treated seriously.

A concern that later proves to be mistaken or unsubstantiated will not result in action against the whistleblower where it was raised genuinely. Deliberately false or malicious allegations may be addressed under the setting's disciplinary procedures.

12. Staff awareness, induction and supervision

All staff will be made aware of this policy during induction and through safeguarding training, supervision and periodic reminders. Staff must know who to report concerns to internally and how to raise concerns externally. Leaders will promote a culture in which poor practice can be challenged and safeguarding concerns are taken seriously.

13. Record keeping

Records of whistleblowing concerns will be factual, securely stored and accessible only to those who need them. Records will include the concern, date raised, persons involved, immediate safeguarding action, referrals or notifications, decisions, outcome and any follow-up. Records relating to allegations against staff will be managed in line with safeguarding, employment, data protection and local LADO requirements.

14. Policy review

This policy is effective from 1 September 2026 and will be formally reviewed on 1 September each year, or sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, Ofsted requirements, local safeguarding arrangements or the structure of the service changes.

Policy effective date	1 September 2026
Last review / approval date	1 September 2026
Next scheduled review date	1 September 2027

15. Key reference documents

- Department for Education - Help for early years providers: Whistleblowing (published 16 July 2026).
- Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage - in force from 1 September 2026.
- Ofsted - Report a serious childcare incident (updated 1 September 2026).
- Ofsted - Early years and childcare enforcement policy (updated September 2026).
- GOV.UK - Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies (updated 15 September 2026).
- Kent LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS) - Managing staff allegations / referral arrangements.