



Whistleblowing Policy

Review Date: 1 September 2025

Next Review Due: 1 September 2026

1. Introduction

Whistleblowing refers to the disclosure of information that an individual reasonably believes is in the public interest and relates to wrongdoing, risk, or malpractice within the organisation.

The law does not require proof—only a genuine and reasonable concern.

Whistleblowers are acting responsibly and in the best interests of learners, staff, animals, and the wider community. They must never be treated as troublemakers.

This policy aligns with:

- **DfE Whistleblowing Guidance 2025**
- **Ofsted expectations for safeguarding culture in alternative provision**
- **DEFRA animal welfare and safety standards**
- **DfE Alternative Provision Guidance 2025**

2. Applicability

This policy applies to:

- All employees
- Volunteers
- Freelance practitioners
- Contractors
- Board of Directors

It covers all activities on site, including equine-assisted learning, therapeutic sessions, and alternative provision placements.

3. Policy Statement

Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning is committed to:

- Conducting its affairs responsibly and transparently
- Encouraging openness, honesty, and a culture where concerns can be raised without fear
- Ensuring all staff understand how to report concerns internally or externally
- Protecting whistleblowers from detriment, victimisation, or dismissal
- Ensuring concerns are investigated promptly, fairly, and confidentially
- Ensuring safeguarding concerns are escalated appropriately and without delay

This reflects the DfE's 2025 definition of whistleblowing as reporting wrongdoing in the public interest.

4. Examples of Concerns Covered by This Policy

Concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Criminal offences or breaches of legal obligations
- Fraud, financial irregularity, or dishonesty
- Malpractice, corruption, or bribery
- Unethical or unsafe conduct
- Breaches of confidentiality
- Miscarriage of justice
- Danger to the health or safety of individuals, animals, or the environment
- Deliberate concealment of wrongdoing
- Safeguarding concerns that have not been acted upon

These categories reflect the DfE's 2025 whistleblowing definitions.

5. Learner Suitability and Welfare Considerations

In an equine-assisted learning environment, whistleblowing may relate to:

- Concerns about learner safety, supervision, or suitability
- Failure to follow risk assessments involving horses or outdoor environments
- Unsafe handling of animals during sessions

- Inadequate response to behavioural risks or emotional distress

- Failure to follow safeguarding procedures

Any concern relating to learner welfare must be reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.

6. Emergency Procedures

Whistleblowing may include concerns about:

- Failure to follow emergency procedures (fire, medical, animal-related incidents)
- Unsafe evacuation practices involving learners or animals
- Inadequate staff training in emergency response
- Failure to maintain emergency equipment

Concerns of this nature must be escalated promptly due to the potential risk to life.

7. Procedure for Raising a Concern

7.1 Internal Reporting

If a serious concern has been raised with a line manager and not addressed, staff should:

- 1.Report the concern **in writing** to the **Managing Director**.
- 2.If the concern involves the Managing Director, report it to the **Board of Directors** (via Sam Park).

7.2 Investigation

- The Managing Director will investigate promptly.

- Findings will be shared in writing with the whistleblower.
- A copy will be provided to any staff member who is the subject of the allegation.
- If misconduct is identified, the Disciplinary Procedure will be followed.
- If criminal activity is suspected, the Police will be informed.

7.3 External Reporting

If the concern is not resolved internally, staff may contact:

- Wiltshire Council**
- Health and Safety Executive**
- HMRC**
- Department for Education Whistleblowing Service**
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line**

7.4 Protection from Victimisation

Any attempt to victimise or deter a whistleblower will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

7.5 False or Malicious Allegations

Knowingly false or malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

8. Record Keeping

Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning maintains:

- A confidential whistleblowing log
- Records of all concerns raised, actions taken, and outcomes
- Secure storage of investigation notes

- Cross-referencing with safeguarding records where appropriate
- Evidence of staff training on whistleblowing procedures

Record keeping aligns with Ofsted expectations for transparent safeguarding culture.

9. Links to Safeguarding

Whistleblowing is a core part of safeguarding.

Any concern relating to learner safety, staff conduct, or unsafe practice must be escalated to the **DSL**.

This policy should be read alongside the **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**.

10. Review and Approval

Reviewed by: Hannah Lindsay, Managing Director

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11. Resources

- Wiltshire Council Whistleblowing: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council-democracy-whistleblowing>
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/> ([nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk) in Bing)
- DfE Whistleblowing Guidance 2025

Sources

DfE Whistleblowing Guidance 2025 – GOV.UK

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework 2025 – Ofsted Blog

DfE Alternative Provision Guidance 2025 – Premier Advisory Group