

Whistleblowing Policy

Little Hiccups expects all its Trustees, volunteers and Contractors to uphold the highest level of integrity when working for Little Hiccups. It also encourages all its colleagues (including its trustees, volunteers and contractors) to report any wrongdoing they are concerned about at Little Hiccups. It considers whistleblowing a positive act that is in the interest of the Little Hiccups.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Encourage colleagues to say something if they see something.
- Assure everyone that they will be protected if they report any wrongdoing in good faith.
- Ask people to raise their concerns within Little Hiccups in the first place rather than taking the matter outside it.

What is whistleblowing

There is a difference between whistleblowing and raising a grievance. 'Whistleblowing' means the reporting of suspected misconduct, fraud, illegal acts, abuse of people or resources, or failure to take necessary action by anyone at Little Hiccups. You're a whistleblower if you report certain types of wrongdoing. The wrongdoing you disclose must be in the public interest. This means it must affect others, for example other colleagues, Little Hiccups families or the public.

A grievance is a complaint that generally relates to an individual's own position or personal circumstances regarding their activities or those of another colleague. This policy does not set out the procedure that applies to such general grievances. If a Little Hiccups colleague has a complaint about their own personal circumstances, then they should raise it with their main Little Hiccups contact and follow the Discipline and Grievance Policy.

Protection for a whistleblower

The whistleblower law protects you. Little Hiccups assures you that you shall not be treated unfairly or lose your role in Little Hiccups because you 'blew the whistle'. Whistleblowers who are not Little Hiccups colleagues are also assured that Little Hiccups will not treat them unfavourably as a result of their whistleblowing. Going beyond the minimum legal protection that is for employees only, Little Hiccups offers the same level of protection to all our colleagues that are not employed (such as volunteers) as well.

Who can raise a concern

- Trustees



- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Employees of contractors
- Fundraisers

Who to report your concerns to

Report any wrongdoing or any concern to the Chair of the Board of Trustees or if the concern is regarding them then to the Treasurer and/or Secretary. Your report will be dealt with seriously and promptly. The 'whistle blower' will be kept informed of the action being taken on their report.

Little Hiccups colleagues can also report concerns about certain categories of serious wrongdoing at their charity to the Charity Commission. The commission asks that whistleblowing reports are made in writing via the dedicated whistleblowing email address whistleblowing@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk.

What type of disclosures are protected

It must relate to at least one of the following matters that 'qualify' for protection:

- a criminal offence
- the breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to the health and safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- breach of the Fundraising Code of Practice
- deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above matters

The whistle blower must:

- reasonably believe that the relevant failure relates to 'the proper administration of charities and funds given, or held, for charitable purposes';
- reasonably believe that the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it are substantially true.

Raising a whistleblowing concern

All whistleblowing disclosures will be treated as confidential. You should make it clear that you are making your disclosure within the terms of Little Hiccups' whistleblowing policy. This will ensure that the recipient of the disclosure will realise this and take the necessary action to investigate the disclosure and protect the whistleblower's identity. They will then get in touch with you to discuss your concern. They will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us from giving you specific details of the investigation or the disciplinary action taken as a result.

You should treat any information of the investigation as confidential. While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us achieve this.

The three stages are:

Stage 1	Initial investigation
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	<p>A colleague wishing to raise an issue should take this up either orally or in writing with the member of Little Hiccups they normally deal with. If that member is the person against whom the disclosure is made, the colleague may go immediately to Stage 2.</p> <p>The Little Hiccups member should investigate with the informant and document the facts surrounding the allegation. It should be made clear from the outset that the matter will be dealt with in confidence and that the informant will not suffer any detriment as a result of the disclosure being made.</p> <p>The investigation should take no longer than 10 working days.</p>
Stage 2	If the issues are not investigated at Stage 1, or the matter is too serious or sensitive, the colleague may request that the matter be raised with the Chairperson or Secretary of Little Hiccups.
Exceptionally serious or sensitive matters	Where the volunteer deems the matter to be exceptionally serious, or sensitive they should go immediately to the Chairperson or Secretary of Little Hiccups.
Stage 3	<p>On completion of the investigation, consideration should be given to the next appropriate course of action.</p> <p>Where there is a case to answer in relation to the disclosure 'further action' may include disciplinary proceedings for one or more parties involved in the matter disclosed. This should be dealt with in line with the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy in the case of colleagues. The rights of the informant to confidentiality should remain protected where possible.</p> <p>The 'whistle-blower' will be informed where possible that action has been taken and the matter has been dealt with in accordance with Little Hiccups procedures.</p> <p>The Chairperson and Secretary will be informed of all matters in relation to 'whistle-blowing' and any course of action decided upon.</p> <p>If the individual believes that the appropriate action has not been taken then they should report the matter to the Charity Commission.</p>

Confidentiality

We hope that colleagues will be able to voice concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the incident to know your identity, we will discuss this with you.

We do not encourage colleagues to raise concerns anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information about you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Anonymous concerns will nevertheless be taken seriously and investigated as fully as possible. Little Hiccups is not accountable for maintaining anonymity where you have told others of the alleged misdemeanour.



How can trustees report wrongdoing

Trustees should report an actual or suspected serious incident by emailing the Charity Commission as soon as they find out. The email address is rsi@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk. They should say what happened and how they are dealing with the incident. They need to do this even if they have already reported it to the police or another regulator.

The detailed guidance from the Charity Commission on reporting serious incidents explains what to report for each type of incident. This guidance is available under the title of "Reporting serious incidents: guidance for charity trustees" and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

How can a Little Hiccups family or a member of public make a complaint

Little Hiccups knows that, despite our best efforts, we will sometimes make mistakes or not meet the standards expected of us. We don't want to just ignore our mistakes; we want to learn from them. That is why we request people to tell us when they see something wrong. Please use our 'Complaint Policy' to raise your concerns if you are a Little Hiccups' family of public and not a colleague or a volunteer here.

Policy agreed by Trustees on:

Signed by Chairperson:

To be reviewed:



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