

MARSH HOUSE STUDIO LTD



Whistleblowing Policy 2023-24

(See end of document for next standard review data)

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Description:

The purpose of this document is to outline the procedure of whistle blowing while at the same time describing how practice will foster the culture of whistle blowing to a level which is in line with the recommendations and findings of Robert Francis. For further information on this please refer to the document called 'Freedom to Speak up'. The executive summary and full document are available in the 'Supporting documents' in the policy folder which is available to all staff no matter what status. One of the main aims of this process is to ensure that all staff understand that whistleblowing on issues of safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff as mentioned in the staff induction summary and the various accompanying documents.

More than this it is the overall purpose of this document to explain how we will go about creating a set of conditions which maximise the likelihood that a concern about external and internal safeguarding practices will be raised regardless of the circumstances, personal or otherwise.

The focus of this procedure is to go further than training staff in reporting safeguarding issues and looks at the likelihood of culturally embedded power relations within the company preventing or making it difficult for staff members of all status to report a problem. This is a concern if that problem is to do with another member of staff or the organisation in general breaching policy requirements of safeguarding, particularly if the breach occurs by a member of management or the designated safeguarding lead.

What is of particular interest is that the designated safeguarding lead is in a position of power with regards to reporting safeguarding issues and it is important that this can be circumvented by the staff member raising the concern if need be. Ultimately the goal of the procedures and resulting practice is to ensure that critical evaluation of the practices of Marsh House Studio and its staff in terms of policies and procedures.

Therefore, it is our role, our goal and the nature of our profession to maintain a pragmatic approach to internal critique, transparency and accountability in order to maximise the safeguarding standards and therefore the protection of the needs and vulnerabilities of the students who attend Marsh House Studio.

Policy:

It is the Policy and commitment of Marsh House Studio to: -

Maintain open accountability on safeguarding issues within the facility and outside where offsite visits occur.

Maintain a working and learning environment where whistleblowing is considered the norm and is held up as an honourable act.

Ensure that all staff members (whether full time, part time, volunteer, student or visitor) feel safe in the act of whistleblowing on safeguarding issues.

Promote the practice of internal critique of the practices of Marsh House Studio to be included in the monitoring framework.

Ensure that adequate access to reporting procedures and thresholds guidance is available to all directly to enable anonymity if required, or simply

Ensure that senior leadership understand their heightened role in creating a whistleblowing culture.

To ensure that all staff no matter what status are adequately trained in accordance with current standards of safeguarding children including reporting procedures, information sharing and thresholds.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their school or college. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Policy Statements:

The relevant company policies of 'Marsh House Studio' are as follows: -

1. To actively encourage the development and function of a whistleblowing culture while avoiding a culture of mistrust from developing among staff.
2. To create working conditions which remove all barriers to reporting safeguarding issues and actively scrutinise its own practices for coherence with the policies and procedures.
3. To enable access to support in understanding the processes of whistleblowing and reporting and to make all relevant information through a system of reference documents which are easy and accessible to all staff members.
4. To ensure that all staff members, whatever status, are fully aware of the reporting structures and obligations both internally and externally.
5. To ensure that all staff are aware of their role in the procedural practice of safeguarding.
6. To ensure that sufficient, current safeguarding training is in place for all staff who work directly with children. (See 'safeguarding training policies and procedures')
7. To ensure that all staff are aware of the ramifications of breaching the safeguarding requirements in particular reporting procedures.
8. To ensure that all staff are fully versed in the categorisation of thresholds in terms of concerns, the levels of seriousness and the appropriate timing of responses. This is in-line with the expectations of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.
9. To ensure that all staff work transparently and coordinated in terms of safeguarding issues.
10. To ensure that procedures are in place for immediate response to a concern when necessary.
11. To act promptly when issues are reported and investigate claims in line with the complaints and disciplinary procedures and policies.
12. To ensure that all users of the service are aware of the commitment to transparency and all avenues for reporting safeguarding issues.

Procedures related to the policy statement:

1. **Policy:** To actively encourage the development and function of a whistleblowing culture.
 - 1.1. To do this it must first be understood that the purpose of this is to maximise the likelihood of whistleblowing and remove all barriers to whistleblowing. This is embedded into the job description of all staff including and in particular management staff.
 - 1.2. During the induction of any new staff member they will be informed of their legal and contractual duties with regards to safeguarding (see Codes of Conduct, Part 1 and Annex A of the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023' and the 'Induction Brief'
 - 1.3. Management must be particularly aware of their position in encouraging the social behaviour of the company and therefore are obliged by company procedure to look for and openly question and challenge the efficacy of the safeguarding practices of the company during the regular reflection and monitoring session in order that all staff feel comfortable in reporting issues.
2. **Policy:** To create working conditions which remove all barriers to reporting safeguarding issues.
 - 2.1. As part of a weekly meeting safeguarding policies and procedures will be actively scrutinised by all members of staff.
 - 2.2. Each student is discussed individually in terms of safeguarding and other categories like quality of development of the student but for this purpose any safeguarding concerns which fall under the threshold of early intervention are raised here for practical discussion
 - 2.3. Marsh House Studio openly recognises the pressure that is likely to be felt by those who find themselves compelled to report a colleague or a supervisor or manager for a breach in safeguarding policy or worse for abuse or neglect. To this effect it is company procedure to emphasise that matters of a breach in policy and abuse or negligence by a responsible adult have a zero-tolerance status and that in most cases will result in dismissal from the company as well as in the case of the malicious use of reporting procedures. (*See codes of conduct*).
3. **Policy:** To enable access to support in understanding the processes of whistleblowing and reporting and to make all relevant information through a system of reference documents which are easy and accessible to all staff members.
 - 3.1. Strategically placed posters are used around the facility to promote the reporting of concerns
 - 3.2. This document is a standard part of the staff induction procedure no matter what level of responsibility.
 - 3.3. Ongoing training is used for all staff to increase the ability to observe safeguarding concerns at the earliest possible time.
 - 3.4. Gaps in understanding are identified during staff supervision sessions and a selection of online training modules are available to overcome those gaps.
4. **Policy:** To ensure that all staff members, whatever status, are fully aware of the reporting structures and obligations both internally and externally.

- 4.1. Reporting structures are outlined in the Reporting Procedures' document which is given as part of the Induction pack and is included in the training schedule.
- 4.2. Each job description includes a safeguarding statement stressing the importance of understanding that safeguarding is the responsibility of every single staff member and that failure to report a concern will lead to disciplinary action.
5. **Policy:** To ensure that all staff are aware of their role in the procedural practice of safeguarding.
 - 5.1. Safeguarding responsibilities are included in the job description for each staff member individually corresponding to their specific role and level of responsibility in the company.
 - 5.2. Safeguarding statements appear at the beginning of most documents including the job description.
 - 5.3. Safeguarding forms a part of regular company meetings where the student's progress and well-being is discussed and plans are formulated to deal with issues if they occur.
6. **Policy:** To ensure that sufficient, current safeguarding training is in place for all staff who work directly with children. (See 'safeguarding training policies and procedures')
 - 6.1. It is company policy to provide basic face to face safeguarding training to all new staff members.
 - 6.2. Where face to face training is not immediately available online training will be provided.
 - 6.3. All training dates are entered into the single central record and monitored for scheduled updates (see safeguarding policy for timeframes)
7. **Policy:** To ensure that all staff are aware of the ramifications of breaching the safeguarding requirements in particular reporting procedures.
 - 7.1. *(see safeguarding statement in Job descriptions)*
8. **Policy:** To ensure that all staff are fully versed in the categorisation of thresholds in terms of concerns, the levels of seriousness and the appropriate timing of responses. This is in-line with the expectations of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023'.
 - 8.1. The company reporting procedures which form part of the staff induction pack contains an introduction to the levels related to the thresholds document.
 - 8.2. Thresholds training is delivered internally to ensure that all staff no matter what status are aware of the various levels of concerns detailed in the thresholds document.
9. **Policy:** To ensure that all staff work transparently and coordinated in terms of safeguarding issues.
 - 9.1. Regular meetings are held for staff to discuss a number of issues including anything related to safeguarding procedures
 - 9.2. Any safeguarding updates which are relevant to the provision must be reported at the regular staff meetings. This responsibility is included in the job roles held at the provision by Michael Ross and Lorinda Chambers.

10. **Policy:** To ensure that procedures are in place for immediate response to a concern when necessary.

10.1. The 'reporting procedures' and the 'safeguarding policy' outline the process for situations which require immediate action.

11. **Policy:** To act promptly when issues are reported and investigate claims in line with the complaints and disciplinary procedures and policies.

11.1. For issues which do not constitute an allegation against staff the safeguarding procedures must be followed including compliance with the scheduled timeframes for actions related to safeguarding referrals (see 'MHS safeguarding procedures' and 'ACE safeguarding procedures')

12. **Policy:** To ensure that all users of the service are aware of the commitment to transparency and all avenues for reporting safeguarding issues.

12.1. All students referred to Marsh House Studio are subject without exception to an induction which explicitly outlines this commitment (*see student Induction*)


12.2. All visitors to Marsh House studio must be given a summery safeguarding document which outlines the key points in the safeguarding procedures (*see safeguarding notice board*)

Employee name _____

Status _____ Date _____
(Employee, Volunteer, Subcontractor)

I have read the document and understand the contents and my role in safeguarding our learners.

Signed _____

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| Issue Date: 28/06/2023 | Revision Date: 27/06/2024 | Reviewed by: Michael Ross (Manager/DSL) | Signed:  |
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