

WHISTLE-BLOWING PROCEDURE



For employees workers agency staff students and volunteers

Introduction

EDSTART encourages anyone working in its settings to speak up about suspected wrongdoing, unsafe practice or risks to children. Workers are protected by law from dismissal or detrimental treatment when they make a protected disclosure in the public interest. EDSTART will take genuine concerns seriously and respond promptly.

Qualifying disclosures

A qualifying disclosure is information that the person raising the concern genuinely and reasonably believes is in the public interest and shows that EDSTART has committed, is committing or is likely to commit a relevant failure. This may include:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- a danger to an individual's health or safety
- sexual harassment or another breach of equality law
- environmental damage
- the deliberate concealment of information about any of these matters

A concern may relate to past, current or likely future conduct. Personal grievances that do not raise a wider public-interest concern should normally be addressed through EDSTART's grievance procedure.

How to raise a concern

1. Raise the concern as soon as possible with your line manager. Explain the nature of the concern, the people involved, relevant dates and any supporting information available.
2. If the concern involves your line manager, or you do not feel able to approach them, report it to another senior manager or EDSTART's designated safeguarding lead.
3. EDSTART will acknowledge the concern, decide how it should be considered and explain the next steps where it is appropriate and lawful to do so. The matter will be handled as confidentially as possible.



Safeguarding concerns

Concerns about poor or unsafe practice affecting children must be raised immediately through EDSTART's safeguarding procedures. An urgent risk to a child must be reported without delay to the designated safeguarding lead and, where necessary, to local authority children's social care or the police. This whistle-blowing procedure does not delay or replace those safeguarding actions.

External reporting under the EYFS

Under paragraph 3.8 of the EYFS statutory framework, if you cannot raise a concern with EDSTART or believe a genuine concern is not being addressed, use an external channel. Contact the NSPCC whistleblowing advice line on 0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk, or use Ofsted's complaints procedure. General whistle-blowing guidance is available on GOV.UK.

Confidentiality and anonymous concerns

EDSTART will protect the identity of a person who raises a concern as far as reasonably possible. Information may need to be shared to investigate the concern, meet a safeguarding duty or comply with the law. Anonymous concerns will be considered, although anonymity may limit the investigation or EDSTART's ability to provide feedback.

Protection from detrimental treatment

Bullying, harassment, victimisation or any other detrimental treatment of a person who raises a genuine concern is unacceptable. Anyone responsible for such treatment may be subject to disciplinary action. Knowingly making a false allegation or acting maliciously may also be dealt with under EDSTART's disciplinary procedure.

Records and review

EDSTART will keep an appropriate record of concerns, decisions and action taken, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements. Senior leaders will review whistle-blowing arrangements and staff awareness to ensure that concerns can be raised safely and are addressed effectively.

Reference

Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, paragraph 3.8, effective 1 September 2026.