

Whistleblowing Policy

Next Review: September 2027

1. Purpose

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity and accountability. This policy enables staff, volunteers and members of the wider farm community to raise concerns about unsafe, unlawful or improper conduct in confidence and without fear of retaliation.

This policy reflects the requirements of:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Employment Rights Act 1996](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#)

Whistleblowing is distinct from complaints or grievances and is intended for concerns raised in the public interest.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Farm assistants
- Contractors
- Students and trainees
- Members of the wider farm community

Concerns may relate to actions by staff, volunteers, management, Directors, or organisational practices.

3. What Should Be Reported

Whistleblowing concerns may include (but are not limited to):

- Safeguarding concerns involving children or vulnerable adults
- Criminal offences
- Breach of legal or regulatory obligations
- Financial malpractice or fraud
- Abuse or neglect of service users
- Serious health and safety risks
- Bullying, harassment or victimisation
- Environmental damage
- Deliberate concealment of wrongdoing
- Poor standards of service that place people at risk

Concerns should be raised as early as possible to prevent harm.

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC recognises that it is essential for staff, volunteers and others to understand the difference between **whistleblowing**, **grievances**, and **complaints**, as each is managed under a different procedure.

Where there is uncertainty, concerns will be assessed carefully and the most appropriate process applied, with safeguarding and public-interest considerations always prioritised.

Comparison Table

Type of Concern	What It Is	Examples	Policy Used
Whistleblowing	A concern raised in the public interest about serious wrongdoing, risk or malpractice	Safeguarding concerns, illegal activity, serious health & safety risks, abuse or neglect, fraud	Whistleblowing Policy
Grievance	A personal employment issue affecting an individual	Workload, pay, working hours, treatment at work, conflict with colleagues	Grievance Policy
Complaint	Dissatisfaction with a service or experience	Quality of service, communication issues, processes	Complaints Policy

- Some concerns may include elements of more than one category
- Management will assess concerns carefully and explain which procedure will be followed
- Safeguarding concerns will always take priority
- Concerns may be managed under more than one policy where appropriate

4. Training and Awareness

The organisation ensures that whistleblowing information is provided during induction and annually. Records of relevant training will be maintained.

Staff and volunteers understand:

- What whistleblowing is
- How it differs from grievances and complaints
- How to raise concerns internally and externally
- Designated Safeguarding Leads and senior staff receive appropriate safeguarding and whistleblowing training
- External whistleblowing routes (e.g. NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline) are clearly signposted

Management Responsibilities

Managers and Directors:

- Are trained to recognise whistleblowing disclosures
- Respond sensitively and appropriately
- Know when concerns must be escalated internally or externally
- Maintain accurate written records
- Take action to prevent victimisation or retaliation

5. Safeguarding and Child Protection

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, safeguarding concerns must be treated as a priority. Any concern relating to the safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable person must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

- Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing
- A written record will always be made
- Where required, concerns will be referred to external safeguarding agencies, including the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Safeguarding concerns may bypass internal stages where delay could place someone at risk.

6. How to Raise a Concern

1. Identify the concern and whether it is whistleblowing, grievance or complaint.
2. Raise the concern verbally, by email or in writing with one of the named contacts.
3. If the concern involves safeguarding, report it immediately to the DSL/DDSL or relevant safeguarding agency.
4. The concern will be recorded and acknowledged where appropriate.
5. The organisation will assess the concern and decide the appropriate route.
6. The matter will be investigated or escalated internally/externally as required.
7. The whistleblower will be updated where possible, subject to confidentiality.
8. Records will be retained securely.

(Internal)

Concerns should be raised confidentially with one of the following:

- Megan Dack – megan.dack@dedhamtherapyfarm.org.uk
- Amy Boyce – amy.boyce@dedhamtherapyfarm.org.uk
- Sara Marshall – sara.marshall@dedhamtherapyfarm.org.uk
- Thomas Clapson – tom.clapson@dedhamtherapyfarm.org.uk

Concerns can be raised:

- Verbally
- By email
- In writing

All concerns will be documented and handled sensitively.

Where a concern relates to one of the named contacts, the concern should be raised with another listed contact or an external reporting body where appropriate.

7. Escalation and External Reporting

If a person feels unable to raise concerns internally, or believes they have not been addressed appropriately, they may contact external bodies, including:

- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline**
0800 028 0285 (8am–8pm, Mon–Fri)
help@nspcc.org.uk

- HCPC – ftp@hcpc-uk.org | 0300 500 6184
- Companies House – enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk | 0303 123 4500

In addition:

- Criminal offences should be reported to the police
- Safeguarding concerns may be raised directly with the Local Authority or Safeguarding Hub
- Concerns involving public funds or fraud may be reported to appropriate regulators

8. Protection for Whistleblowers

Dedham Therapy Farm CIC fully supports whistleblowers. Protection is provided under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

- No employee or volunteer will suffer detriment, victimisation, discrimination or dismissal for raising a concern in good faith
- This protection applies even if the concern is not ultimately substantiated
- Any attempt to discourage whistleblowing or victimise a whistleblower will result in disciplinary action

9. Confidentiality

- Every effort will be made to protect the whistleblower's identity
- Confidentiality will be maintained unless disclosure is required by law or safeguarding duties
- Anonymous disclosures will be considered, however this does make investigating more difficult.

10. Investigation and Outcomes

- All concerns will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and proportionately
- Appropriate internal or external procedures will be followed e.g. safeguarding, disciplinary.
- Where possible, the whistleblower will be informed of the outcome, subject to confidentiality constraints
- Written records will be retained securely

Malicious or knowingly false allegations may be addressed under disciplinary procedures.

Staff, volunteers and others raising concerns will be offered appropriate support where relevant, signposting to independent advice and reasonable measures to protect the wellbeing and confidentiality during any investigation.

11. Record Keeping

- All whistleblowing concerns will be documented and stored securely.
- Records will include the concern raised, actions taken, decisions made and outcomes
- Records will be retained securely for accountability and audit purposes

12. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required by changes in legislation, safeguarding guidance, or organisational learning.