



Richmond House

Social Care Services CIC

Whistleblowing Policy

2026-2027

Whistleblowing Policy

2026 – 2027

Policy Number: POL-WB-001

Date of Issue: 1 September 2026

Review Date: 1 September 2027 (Annual Review)

Authorised by: Jay Al Karaki, Head of Service

Based on: The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 (Royal Assent 29 April 2026), the Care Act 2014, the Education Act 2002, and the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended).

1. Introduction & Policy Statement

1.1. Budleigh House, as part of Richmond House Social Care Services, is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with our duties under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the Care Act 2014, we have a fundamental duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults in our care.

1.2. This Whistleblowing Policy is intended to encourage and enable all members of our workforce to raise serious concerns *internally* and, in good faith, without fear of reprisal or victimisation. It is a vital tool in identifying and addressing risks, ensuring our Alternative Provision remains a safe environment for pupils and staff alike.

1.3. CQC expects all registered providers to have effective arrangements to encourage staff to raise concerns and ensure these are taken seriously. **Ofsted** requires settings to have a clear whistleblowing procedure so staff can have confidence in reporting unsafe or poor practice and escalate concerns externally if needed. This policy fulfils those expectations.

1.4. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Budleigh House Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the Staff Code of Conduct, and the Complaints Procedure.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all individuals working for or with Budleigh House, including:

- All permanent and temporary staff
- Volunteers and contractors
- Trainees and students on placement
- Agency staff

(Hereafter referred to as 'the workforce').

2.2. **Ofsted expects** whistleblowing procedures to be accessible to all staff, including volunteers and students.

3. What is Whistleblowing?

3.1. Whistleblowing is the act of disclosing information which an individual reasonably believes shows one or more of the following is either happening now, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- A criminal offence (e.g., physical assault, theft, fraud).
- The failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- The endangerment of an individual's health and safety.
- Damage to the environment.
- The deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above.

3.2. **In the context of Budleigh House, this specifically includes, but is not limited to:**

- Any form of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect).
- Unsafe practices or environments that place children at risk.
- Bullying or harassment of children or staff.
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour or personal contact with service users, contrary to our codes of conduct.
- Racist, discriminatory, or discriminatory abuse.
- Unprofessional behaviour or misconduct that could harm children or undermine public trust.
- The deliberate suppression or falsification of information relating to the safeguarding or welfare of a child, including attendance data as per the 2026 Act.
- Any action that is likely to breach the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act

2026 or the Care Act 2014.

3.3. From April 2026, disclosures relating to sexual harassment in the workplace also qualify for protection under whistleblowing law. Staff should feel confident in raising any concerns about sexual harassment without fear of reprisal.

4. Legal Framework & Protections

4.1. This policy operates within the framework of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), as amended. Under PIDA, a protected whistleblower cannot be dismissed, subjected to any detriment, or treated unfairly by their employer as a result of making a disclosure.

4.2. The list of "prescribed persons" who protected disclosures can be made to for whistleblowing purposes has been updated with effect from 2 June 2026. This includes bodies such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Ofsted, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

4.3. CQC can prosecute care providers for failures relating to whistleblowing and safeguarding. A breach of Regulation 19 (Fit and Proper Persons Employed) can instantly cap an overall service rating at 'Requires Improvement'.

4.4. Ofsted will become a prescribed person for whistleblowing in 2027. In the meantime, concerns can be raised with Ofsted via their Whistleblowing Hotline.

5. Guarantees and Safeguards for the Whistleblower

5.1. **Protection:** Budleigh House will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern in good faith. Any individual involved in such acts will be subject to disciplinary action.

5.2. **Confidentiality:** All concerns will be treated with appropriate confidentiality. The identity of the whistleblower will not be disclosed without their consent, unless this is required by law (e.g., by the police in a criminal investigation).

5.3. **Anonymous Concerns:** While we encourage staff to put their name to a concern to aid a thorough investigation, anonymous concerns will be considered and investigated on their merits. CQC includes anonymous staff concerns (whistleblowing) in its Intelligent Monitoring.

5.4. **Malicious or False Allegations:** If an individual raises a concern in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against them.

However, making a false allegation maliciously will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

5.5. **CQC and commissioners expect** leaders to create a culture where staff can raise concerns without fear. Staff should feel confident they will be listened to if they raise any concerns.

6. How to Raise a Concern

STAGE 1: INTERNAL REPORTING

Staff are encouraged to raise their concern internally in the first instance. Concerns can be raised with any of the following designated officers:

- **Jay Al Karaki**, Head of Service & Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Tel: 07484 371525
- **Hala Okasheh**, Registered Manager & Deputy DSL (DDSL)
Tel: 07761 540911
- **Pauline Bullement**, Health Care Support Worker & Deputy DSL (DDSL)
Tel: 07878 471242

If the concern involves any of the individuals above, you should report it to the next most senior person not involved.

Staff should also be aware that they can raise concerns directly with the **CQC** at any time. CQC's full whistleblowing guidance for people who work for providers that are registered with CQC is available at www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us^[reference:13].

STAGE 2: EXTERNAL REPORTING

If you feel unable to raise the concern internally, or if you have raised it internally and believe it has not been adequately addressed, you can report it directly to the following external bodies:

- **For Concerns about a Child's Safety:**
 - **Doncaster MASH:** 01302 737777
 - **Emergency Police:** 999
- **For Concerns about the Conduct of a Staff Member (LADO):**
 - **Doncaster LADO:** 01302 737332 | LADO@doncaster.gov.uk
- **Prescribed Bodies:**
 - **Care Quality Commission (CQC):** www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us

- **Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline:** 0300 123 3155
| whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- **Health & Safety Executive (HSE):** www.hse.gov.uk/contact

Staff have a legal right to raise concerns directly with prescribed bodies under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

7. How We Will Respond

7.1. Upon receiving a concern, the designated officer will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the concern within 2 working days.
- Assess the concern and determine the scope of any investigation.
- Inform the whistleblower of the intended process and provide details of support available.
- Investigate the matter thoroughly and fairly, which may involve an internal investigation or an immediate referral to an external agency such as the LADO or Children's Social Care.

7.2. Within 10 working days, the whistleblower will receive a written response which will:

- Acknowledge that the concern has been received.
- Indicate how the matter will be dealt with.
- Give an estimate of the time required for the initial investigation.
- Advise on support mechanisms.
- Inform them of the outcome of any investigation, insofar as confidentiality allows.

7.3. CQC inspectors expect leaders to show that whistleblowing and staff concerns are investigated properly, escalated where required and used to improve culture, safety and service consistency.

8. Richmond House / Budleigh House Commitment

8.1. We are committed to ensuring this policy is widely promoted and embedded within our culture. All members of our workforce will receive training on this policy, and its principles will be reinforced to ensure everyone feels safe, supported, and empowered to speak up.

8.2. Staff behaviour policies, in line with KCSIE 2026, must include amongst other things, low-level concerns, allegations against staff and whistleblowing.

8.3. CQC expects providers to evidence safe, credible speaking-up systems that identify

early risk, protect staff voice and lead to measurable quality improvement across services and teams.

Signed on behalf of the Management Group by:

Signature:

Hala Okasheh

Name in Capitals: **HALA OKASHEH**

The policy has been reviewed and authorised by the Management Committee on:

Date of Review: 1 September 2026

Date of Authorisation: 1 September 2026

Authorised By: Jay Al Karaki, Head of Service

Appendix A

Richmond House Social Care Services

Whistleblowing Report Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Role: _____

Please give a brief outline of your concern. (Please give relevant names, dates, locations etc.)

Were there any other witnesses? If so, please give their full contact details.

Did you take any action at the time? – if so, please outline what action you took

If you did not take action at the time, please give details as to why you took no action.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Designation: _____

Document Control

Document Version	Vr 08
Review Period	2026 – 2027
Effective Date	1 September 2026
Next Review Date	1 September 2027 (or sooner if statutory guidance changes)

Summary of Key Legislative and Guidance Updates (2026–2027)

Guidance / Legislation	Key Changes
Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026	Royal Assent 29 April 2026; strengthens safeguarding duties for education settings
Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (as amended)	List of "prescribed persons" updated 2 June 2026; sexual harassment disclosures protected from April 2026
CQC Whistleblowing Expectations	Providers must have effective arrangements to encourage staff to raise concerns; inspectors expect concerns to be investigated and used to improve culture
CQC Regulation 19	Breach can cap service rating at 'Requires Improvement'; CQC can prosecute providers
Ofsted Whistleblowing Requirements	Clear whistleblowing procedure required so staff can report unsafe or poor practice; Ofsted to become prescribed person in 2027
KCSIE 2026	Staff behaviour policies must include whistleblowing and low-level concerns
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	Updated 18 March 2026; reinforces safeguarding and whistleblowing expectations

This Whistleblowing Policy should be read in conjunction with Richmond House's Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Procedure, and other relevant policies.