



ALTERNATIVE ACRES

Whistleblowing Policy

Academic Year 2026/27

Policy owner	Head of Provision
Head of Provision	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
Deputy DSL	Gemma Robertson
Approved by	Gemma Robertson
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Staff should never remain silent about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or safeguarding failures because they are uncertain, fear repercussions or believe someone else will report it.



1. Purpose

Alternative Acres is committed to an open, accountable and safeguarding-focused culture in which workers can raise genuine concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practice or failures without fear of victimisation.

Whistleblowing is the raising of a concern about wrongdoing that a worker reasonably believes is in the public interest. It is different from a personal grievance, although a concern can sometimes contain elements of both.

This policy explains how concerns can be raised internally and externally and how safeguarding concerns must be escalated where ordinary internal reporting is inappropriate, has failed, or may place a child at risk.

2. Scope

This policy is primarily for employees and workers of Alternative Acres. Volunteers, agency workers, contractors and others working with the provision are also encouraged to use these reporting routes where appropriate, although statutory whistleblowing protection depends on the individual's legal employment status and the conditions in whistleblowing law.

Parents, carers and learners should normally use the Complaints Procedure or Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy rather than this employment whistleblowing procedure. However, safeguarding information received from any source will be acted upon.

3. Legal and safeguarding framework

The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by whistleblowing legislation, provides protection for workers who make a qualifying protected disclosure where the statutory conditions are met. A worker must reasonably believe that the disclosure is in the public interest and that it tends to show a type of wrongdoing recognised by the legislation.

Alternative Acres also aligns this policy with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27, Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy 2026/27, and relevant local safeguarding procedures.

Alternative Acres is a non-school alternative provision. References to KCSIE are therefore used as an adopted safeguarding standard while Alternative Acres applies the legal duties that are directly relevant to it.

4. What may be whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing may include a reasonable concern that wrongdoing has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur. Examples include:



- Criminal offences or suspected criminal activity.
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- Danger to the health or safety of any person.
- Damage to the environment.
- Safeguarding failures or the mishandling, suppression or concealment of child-protection concerns.
- Fraud, theft, bribery, corruption or deliberate financial malpractice.
- Serious misuse of Alternative Acres property, funds or resources.
- Deliberate falsification of safeguarding, attendance, training, recruitment, StaffSafe, CPOMS, health and safety or other records.
- Serious or systemic breaches of professional boundaries or the Staff Code of Conduct.
- Unsafe staffing, supervision, animal, farm, transport or site practices that create significant risk.
- Deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above.

A worker does not need to prove wrongdoing before raising a concern. They should provide the information they reasonably believe to be true and explain why it concerns them.

5. What is not normally whistleblowing?

A matter relating solely to a worker's own employment, treatment or contractual position will usually be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure rather than this policy. Examples may include an individual disagreement about pay, hours, leave or management style where there is no wider public-interest issue.

A complaint from a parent/carer about the service received will normally be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure.

A safeguarding concern about a child must be dealt with immediately under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; staff must not wait for the whistleblowing process before protecting a child.

A concern or allegation about an adult working with children must be dealt with under the Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy. Whistleblowing becomes particularly relevant if a worker believes that such a concern is being ignored, concealed or mishandled.

6. Safeguarding concerns and whistleblowing

Safeguarding concerns require immediate action. A worker who is worried about a child's safety should normally report the concern to DSL Daun Beresford or Deputy DSL Gemma Robertson and ensure the child safeguarding concern is recorded on CPOMS.



If the concern is about the conduct of an adult working with children, it must be reported in accordance with the Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy. Concerns about staff, volunteers, contractors or agency workers normally go to Head of Provision Gemma Robertson. Concerns about Gemma Robertson must be referred directly to the relevant LADO.

A worker should use external safeguarding or whistleblowing routes where they believe:

- Alternative Acres does not have an adequate procedure for the concern.
- The concern may be covered up.
- A safeguarding concern has already been raised but has not been acted upon appropriately.
- The person who would normally receive the concern is implicated.
- Internal reporting may expose a child to further risk.
- They are worried that they will be treated unfairly for raising a child-protection concern.

Immediate danger must be reported to police on 999. A safeguarding referral must never be delayed while a worker considers whether a disclosure qualifies for statutory whistleblowing protection.

7. Raising a concern internally

Where appropriate, a whistleblowing concern should be raised with Gemma Robertson, Head of Provision. The worker may raise the concern verbally or in writing.

Where the concern relates to Gemma Robertson, or where it would not be appropriate to report to her, the worker should use the appropriate external route described in this policy.

A report should, where possible, include:

- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant dates, places and people.
- What the worker has seen, heard or become aware of.
- Why the worker believes the matter is wrongdoing or creates a public-interest concern.
- Any action already taken or previous report made.
- Any immediate safeguarding or health and safety risk.
- Relevant evidence or records, where lawfully available.

Workers must not obtain evidence unlawfully, access records they are not entitled to access, or conduct their own covert investigation.



8. How Alternative Acres will respond

Alternative Acres will take whistleblowing concerns seriously and assess the appropriate route promptly.

- Immediate safeguarding or safety risks will be addressed first.
- The concern will be acknowledged where the worker's identity/contact details are known.
- A factual record will be made.
- The Head of Provision will decide whether the matter requires safeguarding referral, LADO consultation, police involvement, children's social care, external regulatory advice, an employment investigation, financial review or another response.
- Where the concern may meet the LADO harm threshold, Alternative Acres will not carry out a substantive internal investigation before obtaining appropriate LADO advice.
- The worker may be asked for further information.
- Alternative Acres will provide appropriate feedback where lawful and possible, although confidentiality may limit the detail that can be shared.

The person receiving a whistleblowing concern must not promise a particular outcome before the information has been assessed.

9. No victimisation or retaliation

Alternative Acres will not tolerate victimisation, harassment, intimidation or retaliation against a person because they have raised a genuine concern or made a protected disclosure.

Workers who believe they are being treated detrimentally because they raised a concern should report this promptly. Alternative Acres will consider the matter separately from the underlying disclosure.

Statutory protection from detriment or dismissal applies where the legal conditions for a protected disclosure are met. Alternative Acres will not discourage a worker from seeking independent legal or trade-union advice about those rights.

10. Confidentiality and anonymity

Alternative Acres will make reasonable efforts to protect the identity of a whistleblower where requested, but absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Information may need to be shared with safeguarding agencies, police, LADO, legal advisers, courts or others where necessary and lawful.

Anonymous concerns will be considered, particularly where the information indicates a safeguarding, criminal, financial or serious safety risk. However, anonymity can make it harder to clarify information, assess credibility or provide feedback.



Workers are encouraged to identify themselves where they feel able to do so and may ask for their identity to be restricted as far as possible.

11. Concerns that are mistaken, unsubstantiated or malicious

A worker will not be penalised simply because a genuine concern raised on reasonable grounds is ultimately mistaken or cannot be substantiated.

A deliberately false allegation made with knowledge that it is false is different from a genuine concern that is not substantiated. Knowingly fabricating evidence or deliberately making a false allegation may be considered under disciplinary or other appropriate procedures.

Alternative Acres will not label a concern malicious merely because an investigation does not uphold it.

12. External safeguarding route – NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line

Workers who are concerned about how Alternative Acres or another organisation is handling child-protection issues may contact the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line. This can be particularly appropriate where safeguarding procedures are unclear, concerns have not been acted upon, a worker believes concerns may be covered up, or the worker is worried about unfair treatment.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line	0800 028 0285
Email	help@nspcc.org.uk
Purpose	Advice/support for professionals concerned about wrongdoing in how an organisation is protecting children

The NSPCC is a prescribed whistleblowing body for child welfare and protection. Workers may seek advice from the service about the whistleblowing process and safeguarding concerns.

13. Other external disclosures

Depending on the nature of the concern, a worker may also be able to make a protected disclosure to an appropriate prescribed person or body. Different legal conditions can apply to external disclosures, so workers may wish to obtain independent advice.

Potential external routes may include:

- The relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for concerns about an adult working with children.
- Children's social care/MASH where a child may be at risk.
- Police where criminal activity or immediate danger is suspected.
- The Health and Safety Executive for matters within its remit.



- HM Revenue & Customs or another prescribed regulator for matters within its remit.
- An appropriate professional regulator where applicable.
- A trade union, solicitor, Citizens Advice or Protect for independent advice about whistleblowing rights.

A worker should use the body relevant to the subject of the concern. Public disclosure to the media or social media has different and more demanding legal conditions and should not be treated as equivalent to reporting to an appropriate regulator or safeguarding body.

14. LADO and local safeguarding routes

Whistleblowing does not replace the allegation-management procedure.

For an allegation about an adult working or volunteering at the Alternative Acres site, Nottinghamshire LADO will ordinarily be the appropriate LADO because the work takes place in Nottinghamshire. Where Nottingham City or another authority is the appropriate LADO, Alternative Acres will use that authority's current route.

Route	When used	Contact
Nottinghamshire LADO	Allegation/concern about adult working or volunteering in Nottinghamshire	LADO@nottsc.gov.uk 0115 804 1272 current online referral route
Nottingham City LADO	Where Nottingham City is the appropriate LADO	Current online LADO referral route advice 0115 876 5166 LADO@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Nottingham City MASH	Safeguarding/protection concern about a Nottingham City child	0115 876 4800; MARF as required
Emergency	Immediate danger	999

15. Recording whistleblowing concerns

Whistleblowing records will be kept securely and separately from routine child safeguarding records unless the information also creates a safeguarding concern for a particular child.

Where a child is affected, the child's safeguarding record on CPOMS must contain the safeguarding information, actions, decisions, rationale and outcomes relevant to that child. The staff/organisational whistleblowing record will be retained in the appropriate confidential management record.

Records should show:



- The concern raised and date.
- Who received it.
- Immediate safeguarding or safety action.
- Referrals or external advice obtained.
- Decisions and rationale.
- Investigation or review arrangements.
- Outcome and follow-up.
- Any reported retaliation or victimisation.

16. Relationship with CPOMS and StaffSafe

CPOMS is Alternative Acres' principal and authoritative child safeguarding record. StaffSafe within CPOMS is used for staff compliance and safer recruitment assurance.

Whistleblowing information about organisational wrongdoing or adult conduct must not be entered indiscriminately into a child's CPOMS chronology. Where the same matter creates a child safeguarding concern, the child's relevant safeguarding information must be recorded on CPOMS and cross-managed through the appropriate safeguarding procedure.

Any concern that calls into question an adult's suitability or compliance may also require action within StaffSafe or the relevant confidential staff record, subject to access controls and data-protection requirements.

17. Roles and responsibilities

The Head of Provision is responsible for promoting a culture in which concerns can be raised and for ensuring this policy is implemented.

The DSL is responsible for ensuring child safeguarding implications are recognised and acted upon.

All staff are responsible for:

- Speaking up about genuine wrongdoing or unsafe practice.
- Using safeguarding routes immediately where a child may be at risk.
- Cooperating with lawful enquiries.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Not victimising a person who raises a concern.
- Not destroying, altering or concealing relevant records.



18. Training and awareness

This policy will be included in staff induction and made accessible to staff and relevant workers. Staff will be reminded that whistleblowing is distinct from grievances, complaints, child safeguarding referrals and allegations against adults.

Staff will be informed of the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line and the internal/external routes available if they believe safeguarding concerns are not being dealt with appropriately.

19. Monitoring and review

The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where whistleblowing law, KCSIE, Working Together, local safeguarding procedures or Alternative Acres arrangements change.

Alternative Acres will consider themes arising from whistleblowing concerns as part of safeguarding and organisational quality assurance, while protecting confidentiality.

20. Related policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2026/27
- Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns Policy 2026/27
- Staff Code of Conduct 2026/27
- Recruitment and Vetting Policy 2026/27
- Single Central Record Policy 2026/27
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Quick guide: which route do I use?

I am worried about a child	Tell DSL Daun Beresford / Deputy DSL Gemma Robertson immediately; record the child safeguarding concern on CPOMS.
I am worried about an adult's conduct towards a child	Report under Managing Allegations and Low-Level Concerns: normally to Gemma Robertson; if about Gemma, contact LADO directly.
I believe wrongdoing or unsafe practice is being ignored or covered up	Use this Whistleblowing Policy; internal or appropriate external route.
I am worried about how child protection is being handled	NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285 / help@nspcc.org.uk .



My issue is only about my own employment	Normally use the Grievance Procedure.
Someone is in immediate danger	Call 999 and take immediate protective action.

Policy approval

Approved by	Gemma Robertson
DSL	Daun Beresford
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