Loreto Sisters

Whistle Blowing Policy

What is whistle blowing:
Whistle blowing is a term used to describe the action of someone who reveals/discloses wrongdoing within an organization to the public or to those in positions of authority. It enables them to report concerns in a way that will not be seen as disloyal to their settings and colleagues.

Principles:

- The Loreto Sisters are committed to the highest possible standards of openness and accountability.
- Employees and volunteers are expected and encouraged to voice any concerns about activities involving children and young people to the appropriate person i.e. activity leader, safeguarding representative or to the Loreto Sisters designated person.
- All people have the right to raise concerns about perceived unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- All concerns will be treated as far as possible in the strictest confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the complainant, if requested. However, if the concerns require further action, the complainant may at some future date have to act as a witness and/or provide evidence.
- It is recognized that whistle blowing can be difficult and stressful. Advice and support will be made available in the first instance by the safeguarding representative, or by the designated person or by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. (See Loreto Sisters Safeguarding Children Contact Details).
- No action will be taken against the complainant if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith. This is in line with the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.
- Malicious allegations will also be treated in line with the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

What stops people from whistle blowing:

- Fear of starting a chain of events which spirals out of control.
- Disrupting the work or project.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging carers.
- Fear of not being believed.

How to raise a concern:
If the issue appears to be of a relatively minor and straightforward nature and clearly does not involve a formal child protection investigation, it may be dealt with at local level. It is important to:

- Voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed, the easier and sooner action can be taken.

- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.

- Approach the activity leader, safeguarding representative, (who will give you a copy of the General Complaints Form), or Loreto Sisters designated liaison person as appropriate.

- Make sure you get a satisfactory response – don't let matters rest.

- Put your concerns in writing, using the General Complaints Form, which outlines the concerns and issues, dates etc.

What happens next:
- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries within ten days of submitting the General Complaints Form.

- You are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

- You are entitled to be protected from harassment or victimization following a complaint.

Self-reporting:
- There may be occasions where a member of staff, paid or volunteer has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. That person has a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their group leader so that professional and personal support can be offered.

- Whilst such reporting will remain confidential in most instances, this cannot be guaranteed where personal difficulties raise concerns about the welfare or safety of children.

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