1.28 Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Statement

St Christopher's Playgroup are committed to conducting ourselves fairly, honestly and with transparency, in compliance with all legal and regulatory obligations. We expect that all Management, Staff, Committee and Volunteers maintain the highest standards of behaviour. We recognise that occasionally things go wrong and maintain that a culture of openness and accountability is the best method to prevent such situations from occurring, and addressing them if they do occur. In order to do this we have a strong whistleblowing policy so that all colleagues feel able to report any wrongdoing in confidence. Concerns should be raised as soon as they arise to prevent further issues.

This policy aims to help Management, members of staff and volunteers to raise any serious concerns they may have about colleagues or their employer with confidence and without having to be worried about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.
It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

1. **Types of Concern**

The policy is intended to deal with serious or sensitive concerns about wrongdoings, such as the following:

- A criminal offence (that has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed)
- Financial malpractice
- Failing to comply with any regulatory obligation to which they are a subject (EYFS, OFSTED, DBS)
- Failure of a safeguarding procedure
- A failure to comply with any legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- Breaches and abuses of the organisation's policies
- Fraud or corruption

- The mistreatment of service users
- That information tending to show any of the above is being deliberately concealed
- You believe somebody is covering up a wrongdoing

2. Procedure

Staff have the right and individual responsibility to raise any matters of concern regarding poor practice at work. Staff are responsible for the safety and well being of all children who attend the playgroup and this takes priority over loyalty towards colleagues.

This policy is intended to

- Encourage and enable individuals to raise genuine and legitimate concerns
- Support staff to take an active role in the elimination of poor practice
- Ensure concerns are appropriately investigated
- Protect those making the complaint from victimisation or retaliation

In addition to this policy we have other policies and procedures covering discipline, grievance and complaints. This policy is intended to compliment these and to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

The Manager or Committee will investigate all concerns that are raised promptly and thoroughly and in accordance with this policy.

Staff have regular training on Whistleblowing to keep themselves updated with local procedures.

3. How to Raise a Concern

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the **Playgroup Manager – Karen Cookes**, who is the setting's Designated Safeguard Lead. However if this is not appropriate then concerns can be raised with our **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Karen Nichol, Helen Collins,** or our **Committee Safeguarding Leads– Sandy Averiss, Amy Ryan or Klaudia Patefield-Smith.**

Concerns are best raised in writing which should include the background and history of the concern (giving names, dates and places where possible) and the reason you are particularly concerned.

The earlier you express your concerns the easier it is to take action. If you do not wish to put your allegations in writing, the person with whom you are making the complaint to will make a written record of the interview and will ask you to sign to confirm accuracy of the notes taken. Although you will not be expected to prove the truth of your allegations, you will be require to demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for your concern.

You should not:

- Investigate the matter yourself

- Alert those suspected of being involved
- Approach or accuse individuals
- Tell anyone other than the Designated person

Within a week of receipt of your concern, you will receive a written acknowledgement of your concern, with a copy of your statement where appropriate. The Designated person will investigate your concern and within 2 weeks you will be informed of what action is being taken and will be kept up to date on the progress of the investigation. You will also be informed of the outcome.

If your concerns can not be expressed to the Playgroup Manager or any other designated individual then you can contact the **LADO (Local Area Designated Officer)**

- 01452 426994 ***Gloucestershire LADO Allegation Management Service***
- ***amadmin@gloucestershire.gov.uk***

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, you may elevate your concerns directly to **Ofsted**.

If any individual is unsure about whether to use this procedure they should contact Ofsted who will be able to advise you on how and with whom to raise a concern about malpractice.

- Ofsted Whistleblowing on 0300 1233155 or email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Members of staff can contact **Protect** at any stage for free, confidential advice, if they are unsure how to raise a concern.

- 020 3117 2520

For more information on this visit: protect-advice.org.uk

Or

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice

- 0800 0280285
- help@nspcc.org.uk

4. **Protection Against Retaliation**

- Employees will suffer no detriment of any sort for making such a disclosure in accordance with this procedure, as per The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Any disclosure or concerns raised will be treated seriously and dealt with consistently and confidentially, in a detailed and thorough manner
- Any employee who:

- Is involved in victimising an employee who has made a disclosure
- Takes action to deter employees from disclosing information
- Makes malicious allegations or discloses in bad faith

Will be subject to potential disciplinary action which may result in dismissal

- Failure to report serious matters can also be investigated and potentially lead to disciplinary action which may result in dismissal
- Any management employee who inappropriately deals with a whistleblowing issue (eg, failing to react appropriately by not taking action in a timely manner or disclosing confidential information) may be deemed to have engaged in gross misconduct which could lead to dismissal
- Where dismissal is the only course of action and the issues are related to the care of the children the Manager will notify the appropriate authorities such as the LADO, OFSTED and the DBS

Linked policies

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People

This policy was adopted by	St Christopher's Playgroup	*(name of provider)*
On	September 2026	*(date)*
Date to be reviewed	September 2027	*(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider	KJCookes	
Name of signatory	Karen Cookes	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Playgroup Manager	