**Barcombe Playgroup**

**Whistle-Blowing / Raising Concerns Policy**

**Policy Statement:** At Barcombe Playgroup, we are committed to **maintaining a safe, transparent, and open environment** where staff members and parents **feel empowered to raise concerns** without fear of reprisal. This policy ensures that all **concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures** are taken seriously and **addressed promptly** to uphold the highest standards of care and safety for children.

**Definition of Whistle-Blowing**

Whistle-blowing refers to the act of **raising concerns** about suspected **misconduct, malpractice, risks, or violations of policies** within the childminding setting. This includes:

* Concerns about **safeguarding practices**
* Reports of **staff misconduct**
* Breaches of **policies and procedures**
* **Health and safety failures**
* Any actions that could **put a child at risk**

**Clear Procedures for Reporting Concerns**

We have a **clear and well-defined process** for reporting concerns to ensure a **safe and supportive environment** for whistle-blowers.

* **Step 1: Raising a Concern**
	+ Staff or parents can **report concerns in confidence** to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) (Mim Austin)
	+ If the concern is about the DSL the report should be made to the management committee chairperson.
	+ Concerns should include **specific details** such as dates, times, individuals involved, and any supporting evidence.
* **Step 2: Confidential Investigation**
	+ All reports will be **investigated promptly and thoroughly** while maintaining **confidentiality**.
	+ The individual raising the concern **will not face retaliation or discrimination** for making a report in good faith.
* **Step 3: Outcome and Action**
	+ If misconduct is found, **appropriate action** will be taken, such as **staff training, policy reviews, disciplinary action, or referrals to external authorities**.
	+ The whistle-blower will be informed **of the outcome where possible** while respecting confidentiality laws.
* **Step 4: Right to Appeal**
	+ If the whistle-blower is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may **escalate the concern** to a higher authority, such as Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

**Confidentiality and Protection for Whistle-Blowers**

* **All reports will be handled with confidentiality** to protect those raising concerns.
* Staff or parents are **encouraged to provide their name** when reporting concerns to allow for follow-up, but anonymous reports will still be investigated.
* **No staff member will face disciplinary action or retaliation** for reporting concerns in good faith.

**Creating a Supportive Environment**

* Our setting **promotes a culture** where raising concerns is encouraged and seen as a **positive step toward safeguarding**.
* Staff **receive instruction** on whistle-blowing procedures and how to report concerns.
* Parents and staff are made aware of this policy **upon registration and during induction**.

**False or Malicious Reports**

* Whistle-blowing should always be done in **good faith**.
* **Deliberate false or malicious reports** will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.

**Review and Monitoring**

This policy will be **reviewed annually** or more frequently if required, to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with any **changes in legislation or local guidelines**. Feedback from **staff, parents, and stakeholders** will be welcomed to continuously **improve our whistle-blowing procedures**.

**Alignment with EYFS 2025 Changes**

This policy has been updated in line with the **September 2025 EYFS reforms**, which introduce **enhanced safeguarding measures**. The EYFS 2025 framework emphasises:

* **Stronger whistle-blowing procedures** to ensure all concerns are taken seriously.
* **Increased protection for staff** raising concerns about safeguarding, misconduct, or policy failures.
* A **clearer, more structured reporting process** to address issues **promptly and thoroughly**.
* A **supportive and transparent culture** where staff **feel confident to speak up** without fear of retaliation.

**Signed:**
**Date:** 28 July 2025