



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Introduction

At Cocoon Family, we are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children, families, staff, and visitors. We recognize the importance of safeguarding children and promoting well-being, and we take our responsibility to ensure that all concerns about the safety and welfare of children are raised and dealt with appropriately.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy provides clear guidance on how to raise concerns (whistleblow) if someone believes that there is wrongdoing, unsafe practices, or a failure to meet legal obligations regarding child safeguarding or other matters relating to the welfare of children at Cocoon Family.

The policy ensures that all staff, parents, and volunteers know their rights and responsibilities when they observe unethical or unsafe behaviour or practices that may compromise the safety of children.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, and anyone associated with the operations of Cocoon Family. This includes individuals working within our services who have concerns related to safeguarding children, child protection, misconduct, or other issues.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the act of raising a concern or report about suspected wrongdoing, misconduct, or unsafe practices. In the context of Cocoon Family, whistleblowing may involve:

- Concerns about the welfare or safety of a child.
- Failure to comply with the SEN Code of Practice or EYFS requirements.
- Misconduct, neglect, or malpractice by staff, volunteers, or external contractors.
- Breaches in safeguarding protocols.
- Other issues of health and safety, discrimination, or unethical behaviour.

How to Whistleblow

If you believe that any wrongdoing or unsafe practices are taking place, you are encouraged to speak up promptly. There are various routes for raising concerns:

1. Reporting to Line Manager/Safeguarding Lead

In the first instance, concerns should be reported to your immediate line manager or the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The DSL is responsible for ensuring that concerns are investigated and appropriate actions are taken.

2. Reporting to the Cocoon Family Directors

If the concern involves the line manager or you are uncomfortable speaking to them, you can escalate the matter to the Cocoon Family directors, who will ensure the matter is dealt with appropriately.

3. Contacting the Safeguarding Authority

If you believe that the matter has not been adequately addressed within Cocoon Family, or you feel it is serious, you may contact external authorities, such as:

- Ofsted (the regulator for early years providers)
- Kent County Council Safeguarding Children Team
- National Whistleblowing Helpline for early years settings

4. External Whistleblowing

If you feel unable to report internally, you may contact external organizations like Ofsted or The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) for advice and support.

Confidentiality and Protection

Cocoon Family will ensure that all whistleblowing reports are treated in the strictest confidence and investigated thoroughly. Individuals who raise concerns will not be subject to any retaliation or detriment. It is important to note that any reports made in good faith will be protected under whistleblowing laws, including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This means that staff, volunteers, and families are protected if they raise concerns in the public interest, even if their concerns turn out to be unfounded.

Support for Whistleblowers

Cocoon Family acknowledges that whistleblowing can be a challenging experience, and we will ensure that all whistleblowers are supported throughout the process. If you are unsure about raising a concern or if you require support, you can contact:

- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL)
- The Cocoon Family directors
- An external helpline, such as The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it remains in line with current legislation and guidance. Any concerns or feedback related to the whistleblowing process can be directed to the Cocoon Family directors, who will ensure that the policy remains effective in meeting the needs of the children, families, and staff at Cocoon Family.

Conclusion

At Cocoon Family, we are committed to maintaining the highest standards of care and safeguarding for all children. Whistleblowing plays a vital role in ensuring that we remain vigilant and uphold these standards. We encourage everyone to speak up if they have concerns and to trust that their voices will be heard.

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This policy is due for review on the following date	01/03/2026

This policy has been developed in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEN) Code of Practice, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements, and relevant national and local legislation, including Children Act 1989, Children and Families Act 2014, and guidance from Kent County Council (KCC).

Key Legislation and Guidance

This policy is developed with reference to the following:

- SEN Code of Practice (2015): The SEN Code of Practice outlines the duties of early years providers to identify and support children with special educational needs (SEN). It also highlights the need for effective communication and intervention when concerns are raised.
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): The EYFS framework outlines the importance of safeguarding children, and it requires providers to have appropriate policies and procedures in place for raising concerns and ensuring children's safety
- Children Act 1989 and Children and Families Act 2014: These pieces of legislation outline the responsibilities of individuals and organizations in relation to safeguarding and protecting children's welfare.
- Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (KCC): Kent County Council's safeguarding procedures provide guidance for managing concerns about staff conduct, child protection, and the wider safeguarding agenda.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018): National guidance for inter-agency cooperation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.