Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

**Disclaimer from Ofsted: The EYFS requires that a setting's safeguarding policy 'should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant local authority'.**

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| EYFS: 3.4-3.18, 3.19, 3.21, 3.22 |

**DSL:** Sarah Cowley

**Deputy DSL:** Natalie Howard

At **Sutton Bonington Playgroup** we work with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.

We support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children’s health and development. In our setting we strive to protect children from the risk of radicalisation, and we promote acceptance and tolerance of other beliefs and cultures (please refer to our inclusion and equality policy for further information). Safeguarding is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with the playgroup’s other policies and procedures.

This policy works alongside these other specific policies to cover all aspects of child protection:

* Online safety & electronic devise use
* Prevent Duty and Radicalisation
* Alcohol and substance misuse
* Lost child
* Arrivals and departures

**Legal framework and definition of safeguarding**

* Children Act 1989 and 2004
* Childcare Act 2006
* Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
* Children and Social Work Act 2017
* The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2017
* Working together to safeguard children 2018
* Keeping children safe in education 2018
* Data Protection Act 2018
* What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused 2015
* Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in relation to this policy is defined as:

* Protecting children from maltreatment
* Preventing the impairment of children’s health or development
* Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
* Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

*(Definition taken from the HM Government document ‘Working together to safeguard children 2018).*

**Policy intention**

To safeguard children and promote their welfare we will:

* Create an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image
* Provide positive role models and develop a safe culture where staff are confident to raise concerns about professional conduct
* Support staff to notice the softer signs of abuse and know what action to take
* Encourage children to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development
* Provide a safe and secure environment for all children
* Promote tolerance and acceptance of different beliefs, cultures and communities
* Help children to understand how they can influence and participate in decision-making and how to promote British values through play, discussion and role modelling
* Always listen to children
* Provide an environment where practitioners are confident to identify where children and families may need intervention and seek the help, they need
* Share information with other agencies as appropriate.

The Playgroup is aware that abuse does occur in our society and we are vigilant in identifying signs of abuse and reporting concerns. Our practitioners have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of children. Due to the many hours of care we are providing, staff may often be the first people to identify that there may be a problem. They may well be the first people in whom children confide information that may suggest abuse or to spot changes in a child’s behaviour which may indicate abuse.

Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well-being of each child in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the children, parents and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention. This includes sharing information with any relevant agencies such as local authority services for children’s social care, health professionals or the police. All staff will work with other agencies in the best interest of the child, including as part of a multi-agency team, where needed.

The Playgroup aims to:

* Keep the child at the centre of all we do
* Ensure staff are trained right from induction to understand the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, are alert to identify possible signs of abuse (including the signs known as softer signs of abuse), understand what is meant by child protection and are aware of the different ways in which children can be harmed, including by other children through bullying or discriminatory behaviour
* Be aware of the increased vulnerability of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable or isolated families and children
* Ensure that all staff feel confident and supported to act in the best interest of the child, share information and seek the help that the child may need
* Ensure that all staff are familiar and updated regularly with child protection training and procedures and kept informed of changes to local/national procedures, including thorough annual safeguarding newsletters and updates
* Make any child protection referrals in a timely way, sharing relevant information as necessary in line with procedures set out by the ‘Pathway to Provision’ by **Nottinghamshire County or** via MARF for Leicestershire County Councilor via Starting Point for Derbyshire County Council
* Ensure that information is shared only with those people who need to know in order to protect the child and act in their best interest
* Keep the setting safe online using appropriate filters, checks and safeguards, monitoring access at all times
* Ensure that children are never placed at risk while in the charge of playgroup staff
* Identify changes in staff behaviour and act on these as per the Staff Behaviour Policy
* Take any appropriate action relating to allegations of serious harm or abuse against any person working with children or living or working on the playgroup premises including reporting such allegations to Ofsted and other relevant authorities
* Ensure parents are fully aware of child protection policies and procedures when they register with the playgroup and are kept informed of all updates when they occur
* Regularly review and update this policy with staff and parents where appropriate and make sure it complies with any legal requirements and any guidance or procedures issued by the **Nottinghamshire County Council**.

We will support children by offering reassurance, comfort and sensitive interactions. We will devise activities according to individual circumstances to enable children to develop confidence and self-esteem within their peer group and support them to learn how to keep themselves safe.

**Contact telephone numbers**

Nottinghamshire County Council’s children’s social care team **MASH 0300 500 80 90**

Leicestershire County Council children’s social care **First Response Team 0116 305 0005**

Derbyshire County Council’s social care **Starting Point 01629 533190**

Nottinghamshire County Council’s Designated Officer (LADO) **Hazel McKibbin, Temporary Service Manager, Safeguarding Children (Strategic) & LADO, telephone: 0115 9773921**

Nottinghamshire County Council’s referral team **Eva Callaghan - Schools, FE Colleges and Early Years (including nurseries and childminders), telephone: 0115 8041272**

Ofsted **0300 123 1231**

Non-emergency police (Prevent Duty) **101 ext 800 2962**

Government helpline for extremism concerns **020 7340 7264**

NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline: **0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk**

**Types of abuse and particular procedures followed**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution or community setting by those known to them or a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child or children.

*What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused (advice for practitioners) 2015.*

The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, but will help us to recognise that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

**Indicators of child abuse**

* Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
* Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
* Unexplained injuries to a child or conflicting reports from parents or staff
* Repeated injuries
* Unaddressed illnesses or injuries
* Significant changes to behaviour patterns.

Softer signs of abuse as defined by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) include:

* Low self-esteem
* Wetting and soiling
* Recurrent nightmares
* Aggressive behaviour
* Withdrawing communication
* Habitual body rocking
* Indiscriminate contact or affection seeking
* Over-friendliness towards strangers
* Excessive clinginess
* Persistently seeking attention.

**Peer on peer abuse**

We are aware that peer on peer abuse does take place, so we include children in our policies when we talk about potential abusers. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. We will report this in the same way as we do for adults abusing children, and will take advice from the appropriate bodies on this area.

**Physical abuse**

Action needs to be taken if staff have reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g. fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles and face.

Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries. These should also be logged and discussed with the Playgroup Playgroup Leader or Deputy.

Children and babies may be abused physically through shaking or throwing. Other injuries may include burns or scalds. These are not usual childhood injuries and should always be logged and discussed with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and/or Playgroup Playgroup manager.

**Female genital mutilation**

This type of physical abuse is practised as a cultural ritual by certain ethnic groups and there is now more awareness of its prevalence in some communities in England including its effect on the child and any other siblings involved. This procedure may be carried out shortly after birth and during childhood as well as adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman’s first pregnancy and varies widely according to the community[[1]](#footnote-1). Symptoms may include bleeding, painful areas, acute urinary retention, urinary infection, wound infection, septicaemia, incontinence, vaginal and pelvic infections with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as physiological concerns. If you have concerns about a child relating to this area, you should contact children’s social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse. There is a mandatory duty to report to police any case where an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, we will ensure this is followed in our setting.

**Breast Ironing**

Breast ironing also known as "breast flattening" is the process where young girls' breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage. Although this is unlikely to happen to children in the playgroup due to their age, we will ensure any signs of this in young adults or older children are followed up using the usual safeguarding referral process.

**Fabricated illness**

This is also a type of physical abuse. This is where a child is presented with an illness that is fabricated by the adult carer. The carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation. The signs may include a carer exaggerating a real illness or symptoms, complete fabrication of symptoms or inducing physical illness, e.g. through poisoning, starvation, inappropriate diet. This may also be presented through false allegations of abuse or encouraging the child to appear disabled or ill to obtain unnecessary treatment or specialist support.

**Sexual abuse**

Action needs be taken if the staff member has witnessed an occasion(s) where a child indicated sexual activity through words, play, drawing, had an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters or had an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour or language. This may include acting out sexual activity on dolls/toys or in the role play area with their peers, drawing pictures that are inappropriate for a child, talking about sexual activities or using sexual language or words. The child may become worried when their clothes are removed, e.g. for nappy changes.

The physical symptoms may include genital trauma, discharge and bruises between the legs or signs of a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Emotional symptoms could include a distinct change in a child’s behaviour. They may be withdrawn or overly extroverted and outgoing. They may withdraw away from a particular adult and become distressed if they reach out for them, but they may also be particularly clingy to a potential abuser so all symptoms and signs should be looked at together and assessed as a whole.

If a child starts to talk openly to an adult about abuse they may be experiencing, the procedure below will be followed:

**Procedure:**

* The adult should reassure the child and listen without interrupting if the child wishes to talk
* The observed instances will be detailed in a confidential report
* The observed instances will be reported to the Playgroup Playgroup manager or DSL
* The matter will be referred to the local authority children’s social care team **MASH** (see reporting procedures) as per the guidelines set out in the ‘Pathway to Provision’ or via MARF for Leicestershire County Council via Starting Point for Derbyshire County Council

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

Working Together to Safeguard Children defines CSE as “…a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs and symptoms this may manifest as. If we have concerns, we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and we will record and refer as appropriate.

**Emotional abuse**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there is a severe, adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child, caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

This may include extremes of discipline where a child is shouted at or put down on a consistent basis, lack of emotional attachment by a parent, or it may include parents or carers placing inappropriate age or developmental expectations upon them. Emotional abuse may also be imposed through the child witnessing domestic abuse and alcohol and drug misuse by adults caring for them.

The child is likely to show extremes of emotion with this type of abuse. This may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive or clingy in order to receive their love and attention. This type of abuse is harder to identify as the child is not likely to show any physical signs.

**Neglect**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there has been any type of neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation or failure to seek medical treatment, when required, on behalf of the child), which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including failure to thrive.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at playgroup unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child’s growth or hurt them), arriving at playgroup in the same nappy they went home in or a child having an illness or identified special educational need or disability that is not being addressed by the parent. A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child’s needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g. a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at Playgroup. They may be clingy and emotional. In addition, neglect may occur through pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

**Domestic Abuse / Honour Based Violence / Forced Marriages**

We look at these areas as a child protection concern.

**Domestic abuse**

The UK’s cross-government definition of domestic abuse is:

*"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This abuse can encompass but is not limited to*

* *psychological*
* *physical*
* *sexual*
* *financial*
* *emotional.*

Where domestic abuse is taking place in a child’s home the child is at risk of harm, whether they witness the violence or not. This may take the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. At **Sutton Bonington Playgroup** we ensure that if there are any signs or symptoms that domestic abuse may be occurring we act without haste and follow our main safeguarding policy

Signs may include:

* Visible signs of injury on the adult being abused
* Changes in behaviour of the adult(s) and child – e.g. the abused adult may become withdrawn, show low levels of self-esteem
* One adult being visible worried about what their partner may say in a certain situation (e.g. if the child has become dirty or injured at playgroup)
* One adult becoming scared of their partner
* Adults becoming isolated from their friends or family
* Signs of abuse in the child (as per the main safeguarding policy).

As part of our duty to keep children safe we provide the following:

Support leaflets and numbers for females and males who may be experiencing domestic abuse

**Honour based Violence**

‘Honour' based violence (HBV) is a type of domestic abuse which occurs in the name of so called ‘honour'. Some families believe that certain actions bring shame on the family and may react with punishment. This may be rejecting a forced marriage, having a relationship not approved by the family, wearing the wrong clothing or wearing makeup. This can happen in families from a variety of cultures and countries and also happens within the UK.

Signs of HBV may include changes in behaviour of the person undergoing the violence, changes in how they dress or act and also in comments they make.

If signs of HBV are present in a parent or staff member within the playgroup then we will act and follow our safeguarding policy to keep children safe in the environment as well as seeking support for the adult involved.

**Forced Marriage**

We are aware arranged marriages are part of some cultural practices. We also recognise there is a clear distinction between a marriage in which the both parties are willing and able to give an informed consent to, and a marriage which is forced. Forced marriage is a criminal offence.

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not and/or cannot consent to the marriage and duress is involved. If we become aware of a forced marriage occuring then we will report it to the appropriate body. If the person is under the age of 18 then we will report it to the children’s social care team as this is a child protection issue. We will follow our safeguarding reporting procedure.

**Reporting Procedures**

All staff have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns and suspicions of abuse. These concerns will be discussed with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

* Staff will report their concerns to the DSL (in the absence of the DSL they will be reported to the Deputy DSL)
* Any signs of marks/injuries to a child or information a child has given will be recorded and stored securely
* If appropriate, the incident will be discussed with the parent/carer, such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to these records on request
* If there are queries/concerns regarding the injury/information given, then the following procedures will take place:

The designated safeguarding lead will:

* Contact the local authority children’s social care team **MASH or** via a **MARF** referral for Leicestershire County Council via Starting Point for Derbyshire County Council to report concerns and seek advice (if it is believed a child is in immediate danger, we will contact the police)
* Inform Ofsted
* Record the information and action taken relating to the concern raised
* Speak to the parents (unless advised not do so by LA children’s social care team)
* The designated safeguarding lead will follow up with the Local Authority children’s social care team **MASH or First Response Team** for Leicestershire County Council or Starting Point for Derbyshire if they have not contacted the setting within the timeframe set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018). We will never assume that action has been taken,
* Keeping children safe is our highest priority and if, for whatever reason, staff do not feel able to report concerns to the DSL or deputy DSL they should call the Local Authority children’s social care team **MASH or First Response Team** for Leicestershire County Council or Starting Point for Derbyshire County Council or the NSPCC and report their concerns anonymously.

These contact numbers are displayed:

Nottinghamshire County Council children’s social care team **MASH 0300 500 80 90**

**NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000**

Leicestershire **First Response Team 0116 305 0005**

Derbyshire **Starting Point 01629 533190**

**Temporary Service Manager, Safeguarding Children (Strategic) & LADO, telephone: 0115 9773921**

**Recording Suspicions of Abuse and Disclosures**

Staff should make an objective record of any observation or disclosure, supported by the playgroup manager or designated safeguarding lead (DSL). This record should include:

* Child's name
* Child's address
* Age of the child and date of birth
* Date and time of the observation or the disclosure
* Exact words spoken by the child
* Exact position and type of any injuries or marks seen
* Exact observation of any incident including any concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time
* Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate).

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and the DSL/Deputy, dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse it is important not to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly and disclosure is not forced or words put into the child’s mouth. As soon as possible after the disclosure details must be logged accurately.

Following the guidelines as set out in Nottinghamshire’s ‘Pathway to Provision’, or Leicestershire’s MARF or Derbyshire’s Thresholds Indicators, it may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with the local authority children’s social care team **MASH** and Ofsted. (or via **MARF** for Leicestershire County Council or via Starting Point for Derbyshire County Council). Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information or concerns they have with regard to a child. The Playgroup expects all members of staff to co-operate with the local authority children’s social care, police, and Ofsted in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about the supposed or actual behaviour of a parent or member of staff.

**Informing parents**

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the local authority children’s social care team/police does not allow this. This will usually be the case where the parent or family member is the likely abuser or where a child may be endangered by this disclosure. In these cases the investigating officers will inform parents.

**Confidentiality**

All suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared in line with guidance from the local authority.

**Support to families**

The Playgroup takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff, students and volunteers within the playgroup.

The Playgroup continues to welcome the child and the family whilst enquiries are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgmental manner whilst any external investigations are carried out in the best interest of the child.

Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child, only if appropriate in line with guidance of the local authority with the provision that the care and safety of the child is paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

**Whistleblowing**

**Allegations against adults working or volunteering with children**

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, student or volunteer or any other person who lives or works on the Playgroup premises regardless of whether the allegation relates to the Playgroup premises or elsewhere, we will follow the procedure below.

The allegation should be reported to the senior manager on duty. If this person is the subject of the allegation then this should be reported to the Committee Chair/Playgroup Committee/DSL/ instead.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Ofsted will then be informed immediately in order for this to be investigated by the appropriate bodies promptly:

* The LADO will be informed immediately for advice and guidance
* If as an individual you feel this will not be taken seriously or are worried about the allegation getting back to the person in question then it is your duty to inform the LADO yourself directly
* A full investigation will be carried out by the appropriate professionals (LADO, Ofsted) to determine how this will be handled
* The Playgroup will follow all instructions from the LADO and Ofsted and ask all staff members to do the same and co-operate where required
* Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation in line with LADO support and advice
* The Playgroup reserves the right to suspend any member of staff during an investigation
* All enquiries/external investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file for access by the relevant authorities
* Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being reinstated
* Founded allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisations including the local authority children’s social care team and where an offence is believed to have been committed, the police, and will result in the termination of employment. Ofsted will be notified immediately of this decision. The Playgroup will also notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure their records are updated
* All records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 21 years and 3 months years if that is longer. This will ensure accurate information is available for references and future DBS checks and avoids any unnecessary reinvestigation
* The Playgroup retains the right to dismiss any member of staff in connection with founded allegations following an inquiry
* Counselling will be available for any member of the Playgroup who is affected by an allegation, their colleagues in the playgroup and the parents.

**Monitoring children’s attendance**

As part of our requirements under the statutory framework and guidance documents we are required to monitor children’s attendance patterns to ensure they are consistent and no cause for concern.

Parents are expected to inform the Playgroup prior to their children taking holidays or days off, and all sickness should be called into the Playgroup on the day by 9.30 am so the playgroup management are able to account for a child’s absence.

If a child has not arrived at Playgroup within 30 minutes of their normal start time the parents will be called to ensure the child is safe and healthy and a log will be kept. If the parents are not contactable then the further emergency contacts will be used to ensure all parties are safe.

Where a child is part of a child protection plan, or during a referral process, any absences will immediately be reported to the local authority children’s social care team to ensure the child remains safeguarded.

This should not stop parents taking precious time with their children, but enables children’s attendance to be logged so we know the child is safe. Holidays will be marked as such in the daily register.

Parents of children whose attendance is inconsistent and generally poor may be contacted by the playgroup manager and their future attendance monitored. If there is cause for concern, the health visiting service and/or Multi-agency Team may be contacted in order to ascertain if family support may be needed. In more urgent cases, social care may be contacted.

**Looked after children**

**Definition and legal framework**

In addition to those already mentioned:

* Adoption and Children Act (2002)
* Children and Young Persons Act (2008)
* Children and Families Act (2014)

The description ‘looked after’ is generally used to describe a child who is looked after by the local authority. This includes children who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care. Most looked after children will be cared for by foster carers with a small minority in children’s homes, looked after by family members or even placed back within the family home.

The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status. The playgroup never uses this term to categorise a child as standing out from others or refers to a child using acronyms such as LAC.

As part of our safeguarding practice we will ensure our staff are aware of how to keep looked after children safe. In order to do this we ask that we are informed of:

* The legal status of the child (e.g. whether the child is being looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order)
* Contact arrangements for the biological parents (or those with parental responsibility)
* The child’s care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her
* The details of the child’s social worker and any other support agencies involved
* Any child protection plan or care plan in place for the child in question.

Our playgroup treats each child as an individual. We recognise that for young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled appropriately with their carer. We will discuss with the child’s carer, and social worker where applicable, the length of time the child has been with the carer before they start playgroup to establish how secure the child feels and whether they are ready to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

We are aware that there are a number of reasons why a child may go into care and these reasons may or may not include traumatic experiences or abuse. All our practitioners are committed to doing all they can to support all children to achieve their full potential. The playgroup staff team are all trained to understand our safeguarding policy and procedures. Additional training to support children’s individual needs will be planned for where appropriate. Practitioners are supported by management at all times and we have an open door policy if they need to discuss any sensitive issues regarding the child.

Where applicable, we contribute to any assessment about the child, such as those carried out under local authorities’ assessment frameworks or Early Help Assessment (EHA) and to any multi-agency meetings, case conferences or strategy meetings in relation to the child’s learning and development. The designated person for looked after children and/or the child’s key person will attend meetings as appropriate.

**The designated person** for ‘looked after children’ is **Sarah Cowley.**

Each child is allocated a key person. The key person will support the child initially with transition and settling in and then continue to support and build up a relationship with the child, carers and any other agencies involved. Regular contact will be maintained with the carers throughout the child’s time at the playgroup and with the social worker or other professionals (where applicable).

The key person will carry out regular ongoing practice such as observations to build up a picture of the child’s interests, and plan activities accordingly to support the child’s stage of learning and development and interests. This information will be shared with carers and other professionals as appropriate as well as any concerns surrounding their developmental stages.

Where necessary we will develop a care plan with carers and professionals. This will include:

* The child's emotional needs and how they are to be met
* How any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed
* The child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity - how this is to be supported
* The child's need for sociability and friendship
* The child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway
* How any special needs will be supported.

In addition, the care plan may also consider:

* How information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority (as the 'corporate parent') as well as what information is shared with any other organisation or professionals and how it will be recorded and stored
* What contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be in the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed
* Who may collect the child from playgroup and who may receive information about the child
* What written reporting is required
* Wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child to return to their home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning
* With the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, whether the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings, fun days etc. alongside the foster carer.

Where applicable, we will complete a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for any children aged three to five in partnership with the social worker and/or care manager and carers. We will also attend all appropriate meetings and contribute to reviews.

The key person and designated ‘looked after’ person **Sarah Cowley** will work together to ensure any onward transition to school or another playgroup is handled sensitively to ensure that this is as smooth as possible and all necessary information is shared. The child’s individual file, including observations, photographs and pieces of art work and mark making will be passed on to the carer at this stage.

**Private Fostering**

Private fostering is an arrangement made between the parent and the private foster carer, who then becomes responsible for caring for the child in such a way as to safeguard and promote their welfare.

A privately fostered child is a child under the age of 16 (18 if a disabled child) who is cared for and provided with accommodation etc. for more than 28 days and where the care is intended to continue by someone other than:

* The parents
* A person who is not a parent but has parental responsibility
* A close relative
* The Local Authority.

It is a statutory duty for us to inform the local authority where we are made aware of a child who may be subject to private fostering arrangements. We will do this by contacting the local authority children’s social care team.

**Staffing and volunteering**

Our policy is to provide a secure and safe environment for all children. We only allow an adult who is employed by the Playgroup to care for children and who has an enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to be left alone with children. We will obtain enhanced criminal records checks (DBS) for all volunteers and do not allow any volunteers to be unsupervised with children.

All staff will attend child protection training and receive initial basic child protection training during their induction period. This will include the procedures for spotting signs and behaviours of abuse and abusers/potential abusers, recording and reporting concerns and creating a safe and secure environment for the children in the playgroup. During induction staff will be given contact details for the LADO (local authority designated officer), the local authority children’s social care team and Ofsted to enable them to report any safeguarding concerns, independently, if they feel it necessary to do so.

We have named persons within the Playgroup who take lead responsibility for safeguarding and co-ordinate child protection and welfare issues, known as the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL), there is always at least one designated person on duty/contactable during all opening hours of the setting.

These designated persons will receive comprehensive training at least every two years and update their knowledge on an ongoing basis.

The Playgroup DSL’s liaise with the local authority children’s social care team, undertakes specific training, including a child protection training course, and receives regular updates to developments within this field. They in turn support the ongoing development and knowledge update of all staff on the team.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the Playgroup is: **Sarah Cowley.**

* We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of all children
* Applicants for posts within the playgroup are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information
* We give staff members, volunteers and students regular opportunities to declare changes that may affect their suitability to care for the children. This includes information about their health, medication or about changes in their home life such as child protection plans for their own children
* This information is also stated within every member of staff’s contract
* We use the DBS update service (with staff consent) to re-check staff’s criminal history and suitability to work with children
* We abide by the requirements of the EYFS and any Ofsted guidance in respect to obtaining references and suitability checks for staff, students and volunteers, to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers working in the setting are suitable to do so
* All students will have enhanced DBS checks conducted on them before their placement starts
* Volunteers, including students, do not work unsupervised
* We abide by the requirements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Childcare Act 2006 in respect of any person who is disqualified from providing childcare, is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern
* We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the Playgroup and take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the Playgroup so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children
* All visitors/contractors will be supervised whilst on the premises, especially when in the areas the children use
* As a staff team we will be fully aware of how to safeguard the whole Playgroup environment and be aware of potential dangers on the Playgroup boundaries such as drones or strangers lingering. We will ensure the children remain safe at all times
* The Staff Behaviour Policy sits alongside this policy to enable us to monitor changes in behaviours that may cause concern. All staff sign up to this policy too to ensure any changes are reported to management so we are able to support the individual staff member and ensure the safety and care of the children is not compromised
* All staff have access to and comply with the whistleblowing policy which will enable them to share any concerns that may arise about their colleagues in an appropriate manner
* Signs of inappropriate staff behaviour may include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images. This is not an exhaustive list, any changes in behaviour must be reported and acted upon immediately
* All staff will receive regular supervision meetings where opportunities will be made available to discuss any issues relating to individual children, child protection training and any needs for further support
* We use peer on peer and manager observations in the setting to ensure that the care we provide for children is at the highest level and any areas for staff development are quickly highlighted. Peer observations allow us to share constructive feedback, develop practice and build trust so that staff are able to share any concerns they may have. Any concerns are raised with the designated lead and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner
* The deployment of staff within the playgroup allows for constant supervision and support. Where children need to spend time away from the rest of the group, the door will be left ajar or other safeguards will be put into action to ensure the safety of the child and the adult.

We also operate a Phones and Other Electronic Devices and Social Media policy which states how we will keep children safe from these devices whilst at Playgroup. This also links to our Online Safety policy.

**Extremism – the Prevent Duty**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 we have a duty to refer any concerns of extremism to the police (In Prevent priority areas the local authority will have a Prevent lead who can also provide support).

This may be a cause for concern relating to a change in behaviour of a child or family member, comments causing concern made to a member of the team (or other persons in the setting) or actions that lead staff to be worried about the safety of a child in their care. We have a Prevent Duty and Radicalisation policy in place. Please refer to this for specific details.

**Online Safety**

We take the safety of our children very seriously and this includes their online safety. Please refer to the ‘Online Safety policy’ for details on this.

**Human Trafficking and Slavery**

**Background**

Child trafficking and modern slavery is becoming a more frequent form of child abuse. Children are recruited, moved, transported and then exploited, forced to work or are sold on.

Modern slavery is a term that covers:

* Slavery
* Servitude and forced or compulsory labour
* Human trafficking.

Victims of modern slavery are also likely to be subjected to other types of abuse such as physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

For an adult or child to have been a victim of human trafficking there must have been:

* *Action* (e.g. recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation)
* *Means* (threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, abuse of power or vulnerability) There does not need to be “means” for children as they are not able to give informed consent
* *Purpose* (e.g. sexual exploitation, forced labour or domestic servitude, slavery, financial exploitation, illegal adoption, removal of organs).

**Procedure:**

When a concern is raised about slavery or trafficking then we will follow our safeguarding procedure. If the child (or adult) is at risk of immediate harm then the police will be called, otherwise the local authority will be contacted and the referral process will be followed as per the safeguarding procedure

Our Playgroup has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare. Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of the committee/ DSL/ manager at the earliest opportunity.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **This policy was adopted on** | **Signed on behalf of the playgroup** | **Date for review** |
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1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512906/Multi_Agency_Statutory_Guidance_on_FGM__-_FINAL.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)