

Safeguarding children and child protection

Policy statement

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Our Child Protection Policy is based on the three key commitments of the Pre-school Learning Alliance Child Protection Policy.

Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments of the Alliance Child Protection Policy.

Key commitment 1

We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

- Our designated persons (2 senior members of staff) who co-ordinates child protection issues are, and are always available:
Alison Wright (Supervisor) Emily Banks (Deputy Supervisor)

- Our designated officer (a member of the management team) who oversees this work is:
Victoria Pinney (Chairperson)

- We ensure all staff are trained to understand our child protection policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of child protection issues, are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, and understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding concerns are reported to the local authority children's social work team via Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Police or the NSPCC.
- All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any safeguarding concerns and know not to just take things at face value but can be respectfully sceptical.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing resources are provided to meet the needs of children.
- Effective safer recruitment systems are in place to ensure that only suitable people are employed.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks and other suitability checks are carried out for staff and volunteers prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks are carried out on anyone living or working on the premises.
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised.

- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
 - the criminal records disclosure reference number;
 - the date the disclosure was obtained; and
 - details of who obtained it.

All staff are then required to subscribe to the Barring and Disclosure Update Service and keep this up to date. This is checked annually.

- All staff and volunteers are informed that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders or reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment with us). This is updated termly during supervisions and annually during appraisals.
- All staff and volunteers are required to notify us if anyone in their household (including family members, lodgers, partners etc.) has any relevant convictions, court orders, reprimands and warnings or has been barred from, or had registration refused or cancelled in relation to any childcare provision (see above questions), or have had orders made in relation to care of their children, this is also updated during termly supervisions and annual appraisals.
- We notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern.
- Procedures are in place to record the details of visitors to the setting.
- Security steps are taken to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Steps are taken to ensure children are not photographed or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child.
- Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the ICO.
- The designated person in the setting has responsibility for ensuring that there is an adequate e-safety policy/procedure in place.
- We keep a written record of all complaints and concerns including details of how they were responded to.
- We ensure that robust risk assessments are completed, these are shared with all staff and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, in line with our health and safety policy.
- The designated officer will support the designated person to undertake their role adequately and offer advice, guidance, supervision and support.
- The designated person will inform the designated officer at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, however this should not delay any referrals being made to the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Designated Officers, Ofsted or Riddor.
- Staff have an awareness of the Prevent Duty and inform the manager of any concerns they have. An electronic copy of this is available within preschool.
- The preschool promote British Values within the learning environment.

- Staff are asked annually during appraisals if they are taking any long term medication that may affect their ability to care for children. If there are any changes then the manager would seek advice to ensure the safety of the children and staff members is paramount. If a staff member is taking medication it is stored in the staff room away from the children and a staff medical plan/procedure is completed in case of an emergency.
- Child Absences are recorded and a policy/procedure in place to monitor this.

Key commitment 2

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents, allegations or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (HMG 2015).

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through:
 - significant changes in their behaviour;
 - deterioration in their general well-being;
 - their comments which may give cause for concern, or the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure);
 - changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play;
 - unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; and
 - any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
- We consider factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parent's drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parent's learning disability.
- We are aware that children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered and when we know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we inform our local authority children's social care department.
- We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability such as, abuse of disabled children; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, such as through internet abuse; and Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation; that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision.
- We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care, we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.
- Where we believe that a child in our care or that is known to us may be affected by any of these factors we follow the procedures below for reporting child protection concerns and follow the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership procedures.

- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the member of staff who is acting as the 'designated person'. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- In the event that a staff member or volunteer is unhappy with the decision made of the designated person in relation to whether to make a safeguarding referral they must follow escalation procedures.
- We refer concerns to the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. NB In some cases this may mean the police or another agency identified by the NSCP.
- We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
- We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-19 as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be taken into account, but the setting may override the young person's refusal to consent to share information if it feels that it is necessary to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been, or to prevent harm to a child or adult. Sharing confidential information without consent is done only where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- **We have a whistle blowing policy in place.**

What to do in an emergency

- *If a child is in immediate danger then phone 999 (the police), MASH (normal hours are 8am-6pm Monday to Friday) 01604 626938. Out of Hours MASH duty team 0300 126 7000*

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour; deterioration in general well-being; unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; that member of staff:
 - *listens to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action;*
 - *does not question the child;*
 - *makes a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes: the date and time of the observation or the disclosure; the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible; the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time.*
- *These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file, which is kept securely and confidentially in the main cupboard.*
- *The member of staff acting as the 'designated person' is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and within 1 working day.*

- Where the NSCP stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the NSCP.

Making a referral to Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub,

The procedures for recording and reporting referrals are set down by NSCP and the form is completed online.

- The NSCP follow a thresholds and pathways process which has four levels;
Level 1- Needs are met through engagement with universal services
Level 2- Emerging needs require an Early Help assessment
Level 3- Needs causing no serious concern but require a targeted response from Child & Family Support Service
Level 4- Needs require specialist or statutory services/Children's Social Care involvement- Complete the multi-agency referral form.
- *Making a referral to MASH can be found on the webpage - <https://northamptonshirescp.org.uk/working-with-children-professionals/thresholds-making-a-referral>*

Escalation

- If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will contact the NSCP and the MASH to clarify the situation and to voice our concerns.

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child in greater danger.
- Parents are informed when we make a record of concerns in their child's file and that we also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding a concern.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to MASH, parents are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the guidance of the NSCP does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed in greater danger.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk the designated person should seek advice from MASH, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.

Liaison with other agencies

- **We work within the NSCP guidelines available at www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk**
- The current version of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' available for parents and staff and all staff are familiar with what they need to do if they have concerns.
- We notify Ofsted of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children or where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff (whether the

allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on our premises or elsewhere). Notifications to Ofsted are made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made.

- Contact details for the local **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)** are also kept. The telephone number for this is **02078252505**.
- If advise is needed then the Early Help please visit the webpage nctrust.co.uk/early-help-professionals

Allegations against staff

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting.
- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, volunteer, which includes:
 - inappropriate sexual comments;
 - excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities, or inappropriate sharing of images.
- We follow the guidance of the NSCP when responding to any complaint that a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, has abused a child.
- We ensure that all staff or volunteer know how to raise concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within the setting. We respond to any concerns raised by staff and volunteers who know how to escalate their concerns if they are not satisfied with our response
- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We refer any such complaint immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (within 24hours) based within the Local Authority to investigate:
 - LADO can be contacted via LADOConsultations@NCTrust.co.uk
 - Referrals to LADO can only be made online via the webpage referral form. This can be found at northamptonshirescp.org.uk
- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted, as well as what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by Designated Officers in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management team and Designated Officers agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff, as well as children and families throughout the process.
- If members of staff have concerns regarding the manager then they are to contact the Chairperson who will seek relevant advise and make a referral to the DO and MASH.
- If a staff member or committee member were disqualified then we would ensure that Ofsted and the DO were notified and they would be released with immediate effect from their role within the organisation.

Disciplinary action

Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of

relevant information, so that individuals who pose a threat to children and vulnerable groups can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

Key commitment 3

We are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout our training and learning programmes for adults. We are also committed to empowering young children, through our early childhood curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

Training

- Training opportunities are sought for all practitioners and committee members involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and that they are aware of the MASH guidelines for making referrals.
- All DSL receive training in accordance with that recommended by NSCP and keep up to date with WNCC provider training courses through the EYConnections email.
- **The DSL and supervisor is signed up to receive police and neighbourhood watch alerts for the local area to ensure they are upto date with local issues that may have an affect on the children and our families safety.**
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the provision, this is refreshed during all staff training sessions which happen throughout the academic year.
- All staff have carried out Channel general awareness and Prevent Duty courses as advised by Northamptonshire County Council.
- **Staff safeguarding training is renewed every 2 years**
- **Staff have ternly Safeguarding 'spot checks' where they are asked questions about their knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding requirements within the EYFS and further training from the DSL is provided if necessary but all staff then receive the Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policy via email plus any updates to refresh themselves.**
- **Staff are asked during their weekly team briefing, ternly 1:1 and Peer observation and their annual Appraisal if they have any safeguarding or SEN concerns regarding the children in our care, plus if they have anything to declare regarding their personal circumstances that may have an impact on the safeguarding of the children in our care.**
- **Online safety training is also covered in the annual staff safeguarding training within the setting and as and when needed as seen fit by the DSL.**

Planning

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

Curriculum

- We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for individuals, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

Confidentiality

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of NSCP.

Support to families

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, information sharing, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the NSCP.

Child Absences

- We record all child attendance on our electronic Google Sheet which has restricted access.
- Reasons for child absence is recorded on the electronic register using a familiar key/coding.
- If staff are contacted in advance regarding a child's preplanned absence this is recorded separately in our 'Holiday book' which is signed by parents and includes; Date reported, staff reported to, Date absence is taking place and reason for absence.
- Reasons for absence are followed up and recorded accordingly.
- A separate spread sheet is completed to monitor patterns for children's absences and allow the DSL and Funding Admin to discuss any issues that may arise from frequent absences.
- Staff are supported by the DSL to recognise absences of concern, in line with our Safeguarding training and policy.
- **If a child is absent from preschool and we are not notified, the child's emergency contacts are contacted via phone and/or email. We also use our online learning journal, Tapestry, to attempt contact. We continue to use these methods until contact has been made and a reason provided on the first day of**

absence. This is continued daily till contact is made. If by the third day of absence no contact has been made a home visit will be made if deemed necessary.

- On the third day if we have been unable to make contact with any family members and the home visit was unsuccessful then we would follow our Safeguarding procedures for contacting MASH for advice.
- Parents are required to inform us in advance and in writing of any preplanned absences from preschool such as holidays, appointments, days trips etc this is then recorded in the 'Holiday book'
- A courtesy call may be made to those children absent due to a long term illness/exclusion periods and for any children who are under safeguarding concerns.
- Children with persistent absences are highlighted to the DSL, through staff communications and briefings. It is then decided if their absence needs to be recorded on the 'Absence concerns' record sheet, this is an additional form completed to monitor a child's individual absences which can later be used more readily in accessing the safeguarding needs of the child and family.

Please also refer to our E-safety and Whistleblowing policies for further information and procedures for safeguarding our staff, children and families.