



## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

*Updated July 2011*

### CHILD PROTECTION

We believe that each child is special and deserves our love, care and protection and that their best interests must be paramount. EYFS (2008) states that “the provider must take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children”.

- All staff at the Pre-school aim to work in partnership with parents\* and thus to work from a basis of mutual trust and respect.
- We endeavour to keep in contact with parents when there are concerns to share information about injuries, changes in behaviour and other such information.
- In a situation where the staff have concerns or have noticed injuries, parents will be contacted to gain an explanation. If the explanation does not match the injury or concern, the designated teacher will be informed and the necessary action taken.
- All staff members will attend child protection training.

### CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

#### **a) RECOGNITION:**

All staff need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse.

All staff involved with the children and families need to be alerted to signs that families are under stress and in need of help.

#### **b) RECORDING:**

Designated person: **Pam Willemse.**

The designated staff member is responsible for keeping recorded information about each child for whom there are developing concerns and for collecting statements from those involved. Records should include all aspects of the concerns and be dated and signed. Records will be kept in a locked cabinet.

Where available, the following information should be provided with the referral (but absence of information must not delay referral)

- Cause for concern including details of any allegations, their sources, timing and location
- What the child said

\* where parents are referred to in this and other policies, this also includes carers, child minders etc.)

- Child's current location and emotional and physical condition
- Whether the child needs immediate protection
- Full names, date of birth and gender of child/ren
- Family address (current and previous)
- Identity of those with parental responsibility
- Names and date of birth of all household members and any known regular visitors to the household
- Details of child's extended family or community who are significant for the child
- Ethnicity, first language and religion of the child/ren and parents/carers
- Any need for an interpreter, signer or other communication aid
- Any special needs of child/ren and other household members
- Any significant/important recent or historical events / incidents in child or family's life, including previous concerns
- Details of any alleged perpetrators (if relevant)
- Background information relevant to referral e.g. positive aspects of parents care, previous concerns, pertinent parental issues (such as mental health, domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, threats and violence towards professionals)
- Referrer's relationship and knowledge of child and parents / carers
- Known current or previous involvement of other agencies / professionals e.g. schools, GPs
- Information regarding parental knowledge of, and agreement to, the referral

All professional referrals must be confirmed in writing, by the referrer, within 24 working hours, using an interagency referral form.

The referrer should keep a written record of:

- Discussions with the child
- Discussions with the parent
- Discussions with managers
- Information provided to Children's social care
- Decisions taken (clearly timed, dated and signed)

## REFERRAL

1. If any member of staff has concerns about a child's welfare, they will:

- Listen to the child, offering reassurance and assurance that she or he will take action
- Not question the child
- Make a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
  - Date and time of the observation or disclosure
  - The exact words spoken by the child as far as possible
  - The name of the person whom the concern was reported, with date and time
  - The names of any other people present at the time

These records are signed and dated and kept securely and confidentially in a locked cupboard in the Pre-school office.

2. They will inform the Pre-school manager

3. We notify the registration authority (OFSTED) of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the wellbeing of children

4. Contact details for the local National Society for the Prevention or Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) are also kept.

5. Professional referrals cannot be kept anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that during the course of enquiries it will be made clear which agency has originated the referral.

6. Any indication of abuse should result in an enquiry to the Duty Assessment Team. Contact details: 01273 296527 (east team) 01273 295920 (central team) 01273 294470

7. A check should be made on involvement with other agencies.

### **When immediate action needs to take place and urgent medical attention given:**

If the child is suffering from a serious injury, medical attention must be sought immediately from Accident and Emergency (A&E). Children's social care and the duty consultant paediatrician must be informed.

### **Ensuring immediate safety**

The safety of children is paramount in all decisions relating to their welfare. Any action taken by members of staff from an LSBC agency should ensure that no child is left in immediate danger.

The law (Children Act 1989) empowers anyone who has actual care of a child to do all that is reasonable in the circumstances to safeguard her / his welfare.

A teacher, foster carer, childminder or any professional should for example take all reasonable steps to offer a child immediate protection from an aggressive parent.

## PROCESS

Contact number for local police is 0845 6070999 and social services is 01273 296000

1. If a child has a serious injury and requires immediate treatment, arrangements will be made to transport the child to hospital, following procedures for this unless an ambulance is needed.
2. Call the family social worker, if there is one. If not, call the duty officer at the numbers above. Make sure it is made clear that the report is being made under Child Safeguarding Procedures. We co-operate fully in any subsequent investigations. Get name of officer and write it down – keep a copy of conversation.
3. The oral report will be immediately followed by a report in writing, using the Child Protection Referral Form issued by the local authority. This is in the Pre-school Learning Alliance's publication 'Child Protection Record' (HMG 2000)
4. Inform parents? If not sure - seek advice.
5. Collate evidence/information and store in lockable cupboard in the office assuring confidentiality

## SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child and liaising at all times with the local children's social care team.
- 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 Local Safeguarding Children Board.

## ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF

- If an allegation of abuse should be made against a member of staff, it will be investigated thoroughly and independently to take account of the best interests of the child and to allay any lingering doubts or suspicions that may be apparent.
- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting.
- Information concerning an allegation must be reported to the Manager and Committee, who will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Nigel Hancock, Hove Park Mansion, 01273 295375 and OFSTED

- All information will be kept in a lockable cupboard in the office and kept confidential. As part of an investigation about a worker, the police and Social Services will consult the Early Years Directorate of OFSTED.
- After an investigation has been completed, OFSTED has the responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the registration of that person or service to continue.
- In the case of serious allegations it will be necessary to suspend the member of staff immediately until the investigation is concluded. In other cases it may be appropriate to modify the individual's duties to ensure that they are not left unsupervised to care for children. In the case where there is an allegation against the Manager, the deputy manager will step up as acting manager.
- OFSTED complaints number: 0300 123 1231

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

- Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the setting because of misconduct relating to a child, we will notify the Independent Barring Board administrators so that the name may be included on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults barred list.

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- Primary legislation
- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

## **LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

### **Policy Statement**

Early years settings are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Definition of 'Looked after Children' (LAC): Children and young people become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most LAC will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s).

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after

children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken into the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has impact on their emotional well-being.

In our setting we place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on these two important concepts, attachment and resilience. The bases of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives as the basis for resilience, we have a key person system in place to ensure the child's needs are met. These aspects of well-being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and are the basis in developing positive dispositions for learning. For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

## **INFORMATION SHARING**

"Ensuring that children and young people are kept safe and receive the best support they need when they need it is vital. Where information sharing is necessary to achieve this objective it is important that the practitioners have a clear understanding of when information can be shared. It is also for them to understand the circumstances of when sharing is inappropriate. The Data Protection Act is not a barrier to sharing information but is in place to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately."

Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner  
Introduction to 'Information Sharing: Practitioner's' Guide' (HMG 2006)

### **Policy Statement**

We recognise that parents have a right to know that information they share will be regarded as confidential as well as be informed about the circumstances, and reasons, when we are obliged to share information.

We are obliged to share confidential information without authorisation from the person who provided it or to whom it relates if it is in the public interest. That is when:

- It is to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been or to prevent harm to a child or adult; or
- Not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.

The decision should never be made as an individual, but with the back-up of management committee members. The three crises are:

- Where there is evidence that the child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm
- Where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm
- To prevent significant harm arising to children and young people or serious harm to adults, including the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime

### **Procedures**

Our procedure is based on the 6 points for Good Practice as set out in *Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide* (HMG 2006)

1. Explain to families how, when and why information will be shared about them and with whom. That consent is normally obtained, unless it puts the child at risk or undermines a criminal investigation.

- We ensure parents receive information about our information sharing policy when starting their child in the centre.
- We ensure parents have information about our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy.
- We ensure parents have information about the circumstances when information will be shared with external agencies for example with regard to any special needs the child may have or transition to school.

2. Consider the safety and welfare of the child when making a decision about sharing information - if there are concerns regarding 'significant harm' the child's well-being and safety is paramount

- We record concerns and discuss these with the setting's designated person for child protection matters. Record decisions made and the reasons why information will be shared and with whom.
- We follow the procedures for reporting concerns and record keeping.

3. Respect the wishes of children and parents not to consent to share confidential information. However, in the interests of the child we are able to judge when it is reasonable to override their wish.

- Guidelines for consent are part of this procedure
- Managers are conversant with this and are able to advise staff accordingly

4. Seek advice when there are doubts about possible significant harm to child or others

- Managers contact children's social care for advice where they have doubts or are unsure

5. Information shared should be accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose it is being shared for and shared only with those who need to know and shared securely.

- Our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection procedure and record keeping procedures set out how and where information should be recorded and what information should be shared with another agency when making a referral

## **MISSING CHILD POLICY**

### **Policy Statement**

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off our premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit / entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

## Procedures

### Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person / staff alerts the setting manager
- The setting manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police
- The setting manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this
- The setting manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

### Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do to when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting manager and / or other staff back in the setting. If the setting manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that
- The setting manager or manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported
- The setting manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing
- The setting manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the setting manager. The setting is advised of the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have returned to the setting
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting
- An indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact police if the child is not found
- The setting manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately

- The setting manager, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive

### The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- The setting manager together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee or owner speaks with the parent(s)
- The chairperson and management committee or owner, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing
  - The date and time of the report
  - What staff/children were in the group / outing and the name of the staff member designated responsibility for the missing child
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing
  - What has taken place in the group/outing since the child went missing
  - The time it is estimated that the child went missing
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address

The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents Policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution

- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, OFSTED is informed
- The insurance provider is informed

### Managing People

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Setting managers need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable
- The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members

of staff, one of whom is the setting manager and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative, or the proprietor.

- No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice

## **SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN ON OUTINGS AND VISITS**

### **Policy Statement**

Children benefit from being taken out of the setting to go on visits or trips to local parks or other suitable venues for activities which enhance their learning experiences. Some settings do not have direct access to outdoor provision on their premises and will need to take children out daily. Staff in our setting ensure that there are procedures to keep children safe on outings: all staff and volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures below.

### **Procedures**

- Parents sign a general consent on registration for their children to be taken out as part of the daily activities of the setting
- This general consent details the venues used for daily activities
- There is a risk assessment for each venue carried out, which is reviewed regularly
- Parents are always asked to sign specific consent forms before major outings
- A risk assessment is carried out before an outing takes place
- All venue risk assessments are made available for parents to see
- Our adult to child ration is high, normally one adult to two children, depending on their age, sensibility and type of venue as well as how it is to be reached
- Named children are assigned to individual staff to ensure each child is individually supervised, to ensure no child goes astray, and that there is no unauthorised access to children
- Outings are recorded and information is left at the Church reception when all are attending
  - The date and time of outing
  - The venue and mode of transport

- Names of staff and children attending
- Time of return
- Staff take a mobile phone on outings, and supply of tissues, wipes, pants etc as well as a mini first aid pack, snacks and water. The amount of equipment will vary and be consistent with the venue and the number of children as well as how long they will be out for.
- Staff take a list of children with them with contact numbers of parents/carers
- A minimum of two staff should accompany children on outings and a minimum of two should remain behind with the rest of the children

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications:

- Register and Outings Record (2006)
- Risk Management in Early Years Settings (2007)

## **MAINTAINING CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND SECURITY ON PREMISES**

### **Policy Statement**

We maintain the highest possible security of our premises to ensure that each child is safely cared for during their time with us.

### **Procedures**

#### **Children's Personal Safety**

- We ensure all employed staff have been checked for criminal records by enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau
- All children are supervised by adults at all times
- Whenever children are on the premises at least two adults are present
- We carry out risk assessment to ensure children are not made vulnerable within any part of our premises, nor by any activity

### **Security**

- Systems are in place for the safe arrival and departure of children. We have CCTV cameras placed at the entrance to the Pre-school
- The times of the children's arrivals and departures are recorded
- The arrival and departure times of adults - staff, volunteers and visitors - are recorded
- Our systems prevent unauthorised access to our premises
- Our systems prevent children from leaving our premises unnoticed
- The personal possessions of staff and volunteers are securely stored during sessions

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications:

- Risk Management in Early Years Settings (2007)

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND CLIENT ACCESS TO RECORDS**

### **Policy statement**

Definition: 'Confidential information is information of some sensitivity, which is not already lawfully in the public domain or readily available from another public source, and which has been shared in a relationship where the person giving the information understood it would not be shared with others.' (Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide).

In our setting, staff and managers can be said to have a 'confidential relationship' with families. It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and carers while ensuring that they access high quality early years care and education in our setting. We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children. There are record keeping systems in place that meet legal requirements; means of storing and sharing that information take place within the framework of the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.

### Confidentiality procedures

- We always check whether parents regard the information they share with us to be regarded as confidential or not
- Some parents sometimes share information about themselves with other parents as well as staff; the setting cannot be held responsible if information is shared beyond those parents whom the person has 'confided' in
- Information shared between parents in a discussion or training group is usually bound by a shared agreement that the information is confidential to the group and not discussed outside of it
- We keep all records securely

### Further guidance

- Information Sharing: Practitioner's Guide (HMG 2006)

### **Client access to records procedures**

Parents may request access to any confidentially records held on their child and family following the procedure below:

- Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the setting manager
- The setting manager informs the chairperson of the management committee and sends a written acknowledgement
- The setting commits to providing access within 14 days, although this may be extended

## Procedures

All settings are required to keep a 'summary log' of all complaints that reach stage two or beyond. This is to be made available to parents as well as to OFSTED inspectors. A full procedure is set out in the Pre-school Learning Alliance publication Summary Complaints Record which acts as the 'summary log' for this purpose

## Making a complaint

### Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision talks over, first of all, his/her concerns with the setting manager
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage

### Stage 2

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the setting manager and the management committee
- The setting stores written complaints from parents in a locked cupboard in the office for confidentiality
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the setting manager meets with the parent to discuss the outcome
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged

### Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the setting manager and the management committee. The parents should have friend or partner present if required and the leader should have the support of the chairperson of the management committee present
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged

### Stage 4

- If at the stage three meeting the parent and setting cannot reach agreement, OFSTED will be contacted to help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways forward
- OFSTED Complaints number: 0300 123 1231

- The setting manager prepares the file for viewing
- All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. Copies of these letters are retained on file
- 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records
- It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to themselves
- When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter
- A photocopy of the complete file is taken
- The setting manager goes through the file and removes any information which a third party has refused to consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
- What remains is the information recorded by the setting, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'
- The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parents who are invited in to discuss the contents. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the setting manager, so that it can be explained
- Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent has possible grounds for litigation against the setting or another (third party) agency

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child.

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998

## **MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### **Policy Statement**

Our setting believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our setting and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the setting. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.

## Further Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised HMG 2006)
- What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG 2006)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH 2000)
- The Common Assessment Framework (2006)
- Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2007)
- Information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide (HMG 2006)