



“Encouraging children to feel safe, secure and strive for their best.”

1.1 & 1.2 Early Years Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Policy statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

Context

- The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has a right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- This policy seeks to promote effective multi-agency working in the light of the Children Act 2006 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- The Statutory Framework for the early Years Foundation Stage 2017 sets out the safeguarding and welfare requirements for the early years settings

Principles

Our core safeguarding principles are:

- It is the setting's responsibility to take all reasonable steps to safeguard and protect the rights, health and well-being of all children who are in our care.
- Representatives of the whole early years setting (if applicable) including children, parents and staff will be involved in policy development and review.
- Policies will be reviewed annually, unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an earlier review date.
- We will ensure that the welfare of children is given paramount consideration when developing and delivering all activities.
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection.
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm in accordance with this guidance.
- All children and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support from the playgroup leader/safeguard lead (if applicable) who will follow this policy guidance in doing so.

Aims

- To provide all staff with the necessary information to enable us to meet our statutory responsibilities to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children.
- To ensure consistent good practice across or playgroup.
- To demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding children.

Terminology

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child. (NSPCC, 2020)

Key Personnel

The **Designated safeguarding lead** for child protection in this early years setting is:

St Mary's Playgroup Playleader

The **Deputy Designated safeguarding lead** for child protection in this early years setting is:

St Mary's Playgroup Deputy Playleader

We will ensure every staff member (including temporary/ supply staff/volunteers/ assistance) and committee members know the name of the designated person responsible for safeguarding children.

Roles and responsibilities

All early years settings must nominate a senior member of staff to coordinate child protection arrangements.

The setting will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

- is appropriately trained
- acts as a source of support and expertise to the setting
- has an understanding of LSCB procedures
- keeps written records of all concerns when noted and reported by staff or when disclosed by a child, ensuring that such records are stored securely and reported onward in accordance with this policy guidance
- refers cases of suspected neglect and/or abuse to children's social care or police in accordance with this guidance and local procedure
- develops effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies
- ensures that all staff sign to indicate that they have read and understood this policy
- ensures that the safeguarding policy is updated annually
- keeps a record of staffs completion of child protection/safeguarding training and books training for staff when due to renew

Good practice guidelines

To meet and maintain our responsibilities towards children, we agree to the following standards of good practice:

- to build a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery
- to treat all children with respect
- to set a good example by conducting ourselves appropriately
- to ensure staff are positive role models to children and other members of the team and never engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- to involve children in decision-making which affects them (taking age and development of children into account)

- to encourage positive and safe behaviour among children
- to be a good listener
- to be alert to changes in a child's behaviour
- to recognise that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse
- to read and understand all of the setting's safeguarding and guidance documents on wider safeguarding issues, for example, physical contact and information-sharing
- to ask the child's permission before doing anything for them which is of a physical nature, such as assisting with dressing or administering first aid
- to maintain appropriate standards of conversation and interaction with and between children and avoid the use of sexualised or derogatory language
- to be aware that the personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some children lead to an increased risk of neglect and or abuse
- to raise awareness of child protection issues and equip children with the skills they need to keep themselves safe
- to provide any form of manual or physical support required, as a last resort and to do so openly and appropriately, and to always consult the children and gain their agreement (taking age and development of children into account)
- to establish a safe environment in which children can learn and develop, particularly in their confidence and self-esteem and to provide opportunities for achievement in accordance with the Statutory Every Child Matters Framework: Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Positive Contributions & Economic Wellbeing
- Ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too
- All staff understand that safeguarding is their responsibility
- All staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues, are alert to potential indicators and signs of abuse and understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding and child protection concerns are reported to the local authority (MASH) 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
- All staff understand the principles of 'early help' and are able to identify those children and families who may be in need of early help and can access it
- All staff understands the playgroups expectation of them in terms of their required behaviour and conduct and follow our policies on positive behaviour, online safety (acceptable user) and whistle blowing
- All staff understand our policy on promoting positive behaviour and follow it in when dealing with a situation (involving unacceptable behaviour)

Establishing a professional code of practice

All staff will be informed of the setting's code of conduct, and will sign to adhere to these conditions. Any staff known to be breaking these conditions will be given a formal warning and disciplinary action will follow.

Procedures

Site Security

Our playgroup provides a secure site but it is only as secure as the people who use it, therefore all people must adhere to the rules:

- All outside doors should be closed and alarmed.
- When children are playing outside there must be a member of staff present at all times.
- Visitors and volunteers must enter through the main door and sign in/out using the log book. Identification must be produced if unannounced. Visitors (including parents 'on duty') must read our 'keeping children safe' statement and sign the log to state they accept.
- Children will be allowed home with adults with parental responsibility or confirmed permission.
- All staff must wear identification at all times.

Children's Information

We will keep up to date with all information regarding the children. This is essential to keep up to date information:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child lives
- Emergency contact details
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child if different from above
- Any other agencies involved with the family
- If the child is or has been on a Child Protection Plan
- Name and contact detail of G.P

Behavioural expectations to ensure children are safe and to ensure false accusations are avoided

Whilst caring for other people's children, we are in a position of trust and our responsibilities to them must be uppermost in practitioners' minds at all times.

We do not:

- use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking, hitting or rough handling
- behave in a way that frightens or demeans any child
- use any racist, sexist, discriminatory or offensive language
- engage in rough or physical games, including tickling or horseplay
- let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon

Safer recruitment

We practice robust recruitment procedures in checking the suitability of staff, volunteers, assistance to work with children (or in the case of childminders' members of the family who are living on the premises) this will include regular enhanced DBS checks, health checks and references and follow guidance from the ISA www.isa-org.uk / 0300 123 1111.

In this setting the following individuals have been trained in this area:

Playgroup leader

Safer recruitment means that all applicants will:

- complete an application form
- provide two referees, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children
- provide evidence of identity and qualifications
- Undertake or provide a copy of an enhanced criminal records and barred lists check (DBS) prior to working commences
- be interviewed by playgroup leader and committee
- Be required to complete a probation period (as set out in offer letter)

Safer recruitment guidance is available from Safer Working Practice guidance – Gloucestershire <https://www.gscb.org.uk/media/2095680/gswp-sept-2019.pdf>

All new members of staff will undergo an induction that includes familiarisation with the setting's safeguarding and child protection policy and identification of their own safeguarding and child protection training needs. All staff sign to confirm they have read and understood the safeguarding protection policy.

Induction of staff and Volunteers

All staff are required to read this policy and discuss it with the Designated Safeguarding Lead as part of their induction and sign a form to say they have read and understood the policy.

Volunteers must:

- Be aged 16 or over (unless on work experience)
- Be considered competent and responsible
- Receive the same induction process as staff and regular supervision meetings
- Be familiar with the playgroups policies and procedures (as outlined in induction)

- Not be left on their unsupervised with the children unless an enhanced DBS check has been completed

Staff training

It is important that all staff have training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse and neglect and to know what to do if they have a concern. Child protection training is mandatory for all staff and will be part of their induction process. The Safeguard Lead (DSL) will ensure that the staffs knowledge, understanding and practice of safeguarding children are current and up-to-date at all times. Where gaps are identified support and training will be mandatory. The DSL will receive updated training every two years.

Staff supervision

Staff will received supervision meetings every half term. This will give all staff the opportunity to discuss any safeguarding issues as well as their performance and learning needs. Staff are asked each meeting to declare any changes to their DBS and if anyone that lives in their household that has a conviction. All changes will be recorded on file.

Staffing Ratios

We provide a staffing ratio in line with the Safeguarding and Welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that children have sufficient individual attention and to guarantee care and education of a high quality. Our staff are appropriately qualified and we carry out checks for criminal and other records through the Disclosure Barring Service in accordance with statutory requirements.

To meet this aim we use a minimum of the following ratios of adult to children:

- Children aged two years of age: 1 adult : 4 children:
 - at least one member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification; and
 - at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant level 2 qualification.
- Children aged three to seven years of age: 1 adult : 8 children:
 - at least one member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification; and
 - at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant level 2 qualification.
 - We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements where a Qualified Teacher, Early Years Professional or other suitable level 6 qualified person is working directly with children aged three and over between the hours of 8am and 4pm as follows:
 - there is at least one member of staff for every 13 children; and
 - at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification.
- A minimum of two staff/adults are on duty at any one time.
- Each child is assigned a key person to help the child become familiar with the setting from the outset and to ensure that each child has a named member of staff with whom to form a relationship. The key person plans with parents for the child's well-being and development in the setting. The key person meets regularly with the family for discussion and consultation on their child's progress and offers support in guiding their development at home.
- We hold regular staff meetings to undertake curriculum planning and to discuss children's progress, their achievements and any difficulties that may arise from time to time.

The Role of the Key Person

We believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well, and who can meet their individual needs. Research shows that a key person approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive, parents have confidence, staff are committed and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

The procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in settings

- We allocate a key person before the child starts however if a child is relating to another member of staff then we can change the key worker to suit that child.
- The key person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child into our setting.

- The key person works with the parent to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a child minder, and co-ordinates the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.
- The key person is responsible for developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents to keep those records up-to-date, reflecting the full picture of the child in our setting and at home.
- We provide a back-up key person so the child and the parents have a key contact in the absence of the child's key person.
- We promote the role of the key person as the child's primary carer in our setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other staff and children.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information, including our welcome pack outlining information on our sessions.
- Before a child attends, we provide opportunities for the child and family to visit the setting. This provides an opportunity to discuss what we offer, answer questions and for them to see first hand what happens during a session.
- We allocate a key person to each child and his/her family before she/he starts to attend; the key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process however this can change if the child forms an attachment to another member of staff.
- We encourage a home visit by the person who will be the child's key person and manager before the child attends, to ensure all relevant information about the child can be made known. This also significantly helps the transition in for new children/families to the area.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting. We also encourage the parents to bring their child along to 'stay and play' before their sessions begin to help familiarise them with the setting and staff.
- We have an expectation that the parent, carer or close relative, will stay for most of the session during the first week, gradually taking time away from their child, increasing this as and when the child is able to cope.
- Younger children may take longer to settle in, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence may also need their parent to be on hand to re-settle them.
- We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person; for example, the child looks for the key person when he/she arrives, goes to them for comfort and seems pleased to be with them. The child is also familiar with where things are and is pleased to see other children and participate in activities.
- When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
- We recognise that some children will settle more readily than others but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left. We expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.
- We do not believe that leaving a child to cry will help them to settle any quicker. We believe that a child's distress will prevent them from learning and gaining the best from the setting.
- We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left. This is especially the case with very young children.

The progress check at age two

- The key person carries out the progress check at age two in accordance with any local procedures that are in place and referring to the supporting guidance to the EYFS *A Know How Guide: The EYFS progress check at age two*.
- The progress check aims to review the child's development and ensures that parents have a clear picture of their child's development.
- Within the progress check, the key person will note areas where the child is progressing well and identify areas where progress is less than expected.

- The progress check will describe the actions that will be taken by the setting to address any developmental concerns (including working with other professionals where appropriate) as agreed with the parent(s).
- The key person will plan activities to meet the child's needs within the setting and will support parents to understand the child's needs in order to enhance their development at home.

Recognising abuse

To ensure that our children are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and neglect. We will ensure all staff understands their responsibilities in being alert to indicators of abuse and their responsibility for referring any concerns to the designated person responsible for child protection.

There are four categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

1. Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

2. Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. It may feature age – or developmentally-inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

3. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

[\(Definitions taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children\)](#)

Indicators of abuse and what you might see

It is vital that staff are aware of the range of behavioural indicators of abuse and report any concerns to the designated person. We are aware that it is our responsibility to report concerns. It is not our responsibility to investigate or decide whether a child has been abused.

A child who is being abused and/or neglected may:

- have bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries
- show signs of pain or discomfort

- look unkempt and uncared for
- change their eating habits
- have difficulty in making or sustaining friendships
- appear fearful
- be reckless with regard to their own or other's safety
- self-harm
- frequently be absent or arrive late
- show signs of not wanting to go home
- display a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn
- become disinterested in play activities
- be constantly tired or preoccupied
- be wary of physical contact
- display sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

Individual indicators will rarely, in isolation, provide conclusive evidence of abuse. They will be viewed as part of a jigsaw, and each small piece of information will help the Designated Safeguarding Person to decide how to proceed. It is very important that you report your concerns – you do not need 'absolute proof' that the child is at risk.

See Appendix 1 (Chronology form)

Taking action
Key points to remember for taking action are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ report your concern to the Designated Safeguarding Person immediately
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ if the Designated Safeguarding Person is not available, ensure the information is shared with the most senior person in the setting that day and ensure action is taken to report the concern to children's social care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ do not start your own investigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ complete a record of concern about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately (dated and signed on each page)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ seek support for yourself if you are distressed.
See Appendix 2 – Child Protection Process

Children who may be particularly vulnerable

To ensure that all of children receive equal protection, we will give special consideration and attention to children who are:

- disabled or have special educational needs
- living in a known domestic abuse situation
- affected by known parental substance misuse
- asylum seekers
- living in temporary accommodation
- living transient lifestyles
- living in chaotic, neglectful and unsupportive home situations
- vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality
- do not have English as a first language

Female Genital Mutilation

This is the partial or complete removal of the female genitalia for cultural/ religious reasons. If we suspect or it is alleged that any of the above has happened or there is a risk to a child- then it must be followed up. All staff must complete the online course to make sure they are aware of this type of abuse.

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative With the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer. A cohabitant of the mother or father would not qualify as a relative. A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. Private fostering arrangements can be a positive response from within the community to difficulties experienced by families. Nonetheless, privately fostered children remain a diverse and potentially vulnerable group.

Local authorities do not formally approve or register private foster carers. However, it is the duty of local authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. It is the local authority in whose area the privately fostered child resides which has legal duties in respect of that child.

Private fostering covers a diverse range of situations. Most educational settings will have children who are privately fostered, although the school/setting may not be aware that a child is privately fostered. Asking who has parental responsibility would give an indicator as to whether or not a child is privately fostered. Common private fostering situations include

- African, Asian and Afro Caribbean children with parents or families overseas
- Black and minority ethnic children with parents working or studying in the UK and living with a host family
- Asylum seeking and refugee children
- Trafficked children
- Local children living apart from their families, perhaps because the family has broken down.
- Adolescents estranged from their parents
- Children attending Language Schools
- Children attending independent schools who do not return home for holiday periods
- Children living with host families for a variety of reasons, possibly to learn English or to receive medical treatment in the UK.
- Back door adoptions

If you think a child in the educational setting is being privately fostered, the Designated person should make a referral to the Children and Families Helpdesk – 01452 426565. Social care will undertake an assessment of the private fostering arrangement which will include safeguard checks on the carers and contacting the child's parents. A worker will be allocated until the child is 16 and the arrangement will be monitored and reviewed and the young person visited on a regular basis. The GSCB runs workshops on private fostering explaining the legislation and the roles and responsibilities of parents, carers, and the agencies involved.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

At St Mary's Playgroup 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 'Gloucestershire child protection procedures'

<https://www.gscb.org.uk/media/2095540/cp-flowchart-feb-2020.pdf>

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- We ensure that all staff have an understanding of the additional vulnerabilities that arise from special educational needs and/or disabilities, plus inequalities of race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation or culture, and that these receive full consideration in relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection.
- We understand how to identify children who may be in need of early help, how to access services for them

- We understand that we should refer a child who meets the s17 Children Act 1989 child in need definition to local authority children's social work services
- We understand that we should refer any child who may be at risk of significant harm to local authority children's social work services.
- We are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and 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 team.
- We are prepared to take action if we/I have concerns about the welfare of a child who fails to arrive at a session when expected. The designated person will take immediate action to contact the child's parent to seek an explanation for the child's absence and be assured that the child is safe and well. If no contact is made with the child's parents and the designated person has reason to believe that the child is at risk of significant harm, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately and LSPs procedures are followed. If the child has current involvement with social care the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision, such as abuse of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and radicalisation or extremism.
- In relation to radicalisation and extremism, we follow the Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales published by the Home Office and LSPs procedures on responding to radicalisation.
- We will be alert to the threats children may face from outside their families, such as that posed by organised crime groups such as county lines and child sexual exploitation, online use and from within peer groups and the wider community.
- Where we believe that a child in our care or that is known to us may be affected by any of these factors we will follow the procedures below for reporting child protection and child in need concerns and follow the local procedures as published by the local safeguarding partners.
- Where such indicators are apparent, the staff member concerned makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with DSL. 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 respond to any disclosures sensitively and appropriately and take care not to influence the outcome either through the way [we/I] speak to children or by asking questions of children (although we may check out/clarify the details of what we think they have told us with them).

- All staff know that they can contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline if they feel that or organisation and the local authority have not taken appropriate action to safeguard a child and this has not been addressed satisfactorily through organisational escalation and professional challenge procedures.
- We have a whistleblowing policy in place.

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, although it is OK to ask questions for the purposes of clarification;
 - 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.
- The member of staff acting as the designated person is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and always within one working day.
- Where the local safeguarding partners safeguarding procedures stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, [we/I] include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the local safeguarding partners.

Making a referral to the local authority children's social care team

- Staff will seek guidance of the steps required to make a referral using Gloucestershire's child protection process. Referrals to social care are to be made by the DSL through the liquid logic portal.

Escalation process

- 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 follow the LSPs escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.
- We will follow local procedures published by safeguarding partners to resolve professional disputes.

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are normally discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child or other person at risk, or may interfere with the course of a police investigation, or may unduly delay the referral, or unless it is otherwise unreasonable to seek consent. Advice will be sought from social care, or in some circumstances police, where necessary.
- Parents are informed when we make a record of concerns in their child's file and that [we/I] also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding a concern.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to social care, parents are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the procedures of the local safeguarding partners does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser or where sexual abuse may have occurred.
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk (or interfere with a police response) the designated person should consider seeking advice from children's social care, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.

Confidentiality and sharing information

All staff understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality, not only out of respect for the child and staff involved but also to ensure that being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence. Staff should only discuss concerns with the designated person or manager. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with [Data Protection Act 1998](#) principles. Information is:

- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- kept no longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- secure

Record of concern forms and other written information will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals. If a database is used to record sensitive information it will be stored on a memory stick (not the hard drive of a computer) and kept off premises or locked in a robust safe, under the Data Protection Act. We will register with the 'Information Commissioners Office' (ICO) Telephone number: 01625 545740 or www.ico.gov.uk and follow the guidelines required. Our registration ICO Ref is Z9303809

We will develop effective links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with any enquires regarding child protection matters including attendance of case conferences.

Allegations against staff and persons in positions of trust

The EYFS statutory framework (2017) states: '3.8 Registered providers must inform Ofsted..of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any persons living, working or looking after children at the premises.. Registered providers must also notify Ofsted..of the action taken in respect for the allegations. These notifications must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made. A registered provider who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with this requirement commits an offence.'

An allegation of child abuse made against a member of the family or staff may come from a parent, another member of staff or from a child's disclosure.

The setting will:

- report such allegations in the same way as any other child protection referral
- record the details that give cause for concern
- follow the flow chart in 'Gloucestershire child protection procedures'
- inform the designated officer on the committee (Chair)
- instigate the disciplinary procedure, due to the serious nature of the concerns, and suspend the member of staff until a full investigation has taken place
- not take further disciplinary action until the outcome of the investigation is known
- cooperate fully with the process of Social Care and the Police investigations
- support and treat with respect the member of staff whilst suspended
- ensure, if it appears from the results of the investigation that the allegations are justified, that disciplinary action will follow, in full consultation with the management committee and with legal advice
- if the result of the investigation is that it was a false allegation, give the individual appropriate support
- inform Ofsted throughout the investigation. Telephone 0300 123 1231.

Whistle blowing

Any individual who has reasonable suspicion of malpractice should inform the playgroup leader immediately. If they do not feel this is the appropriate person they should approach the Chair of the committee, Ofsted, SPA or Early Years Consultant (EYC) in the Local Authority. It is recognised for some people that this can be a daunting and difficult experience.

All reports will be investigated and dealt with in confidence, including only those staff on a 'need to know' basis.

Whistle blowing at Ofsted Hotline: To contact the hotline call 0300 123 3155 (Monday to Friday from 08.00 to 18.00), email whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or write to WBHL, Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester M1 2WD.

All concerns of poor practice or concerns about a child's welfare brought about by the behaviour of colleagues should be reported to the designated safeguarding person and/or manager. Complaints about the designated safeguarding person/manager should be reported to SPA.

Support for those involved in a child protection issue

Child neglect and abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved.

We will support the children and their families and staff by:

- taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously
- responding sympathetically to any request from a member of staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety
- maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies
- storing records securely
- offering details of help lines, counselling or other avenues of external support
- following the procedures laid down in our whistle blowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures
- cooperating fully with relevant statutory agencies

This policy runs in conjunction with the following policies:

- Achieving positive behaviour
- Acceptable user policy
- Parent partnership policy
- Valuing diversity and promoting equality
- Information sharing
- Confidentiality and client access to records
- Suitable people

Playleader

Chair of Committee

Date implemented: 01.09.21

Review Date: 01.09.22

This policy will be reviewed by the playgroup leaders and the committee on an annual basis or earlier if legislation should change.

Useful Websites

- www.gscb.org.uk
- <https://www.gscb.org.uk/i-work-with-children-young-people-and-parents/guidance-for-working-with-children-and-young-people/>
- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/early-help-early-intervention>
- Working together to safeguard Children
- www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk
- Keeping children safe in education 2014
- Guide to safer working practice

APPENDIX 1 Chronology Form

Name:

D.O.B:

Date	Significant Event	Action	Outcome	Sign & Date

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