

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Statement of Intent

Our Playgroup wants to work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

Aims

- We intend to create an environment which encourages children to develop a positive self-image, regardless of race, language, religion, culture or home background.
- We help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- We encourage children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- We enable children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- We work with parents to build their understanding of and commitment to the welfare of all our children.

The legal framework for this is:

- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- The Children Act 1989
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Protection of Children Act 1999

We subscribe to the South West Child Protection Procedures. This is a lengthy document which can be downloaded from www.swcpp.org.uk.

Liaison with other bodies

- We work with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board's guidelines which are downloadable at www.safechildren-cios.co.uk/index.cfm?articleid=24228. The LSCB for Cornwall can be contacted at Room 410, New County Hall, Truro TR1 3AY; telephone no. 01872 322000 or e-mail jfrost@cornwall.gov.uk.
- We notify the registration authority (Ofsted) of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which affect the well-being of children.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, address and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the playgroup and social services to work well together.
- Records of the local NSPCC contacts are also kept.
- If a report is to be made to the authorities, we act within the Area Child Protection guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.

Methods

Staffing and Volunteering

- Our named person who coordinates child protection issues is Sue Dart and in her absence, this would be Wendy Miles, both of whom can be contacted on 01503 265623 during playgroup hours or via the Administrator on 07774 607239 out of hours.
- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the playgroup (staff and committee) are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- We abide by Ofsted requirements in respect of references and police checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unfit person works at the playgroup or has access to children (see Staffing and Employment Policy).
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised.

- We abide by the Protection of Children Act requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment for reasons of child protection concern.
- All visitors to the playgroup must sign into the Visitors' Book.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the playgroup so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Adults who have not had a Police check will not take children to the toilet.

Disciplinary Action

Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the playgroup or internally disciplined because of misconduct relating to a child, we notify the department of Health administrators so that the name may be included on the List for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.

Training

We seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the group to ensure that they recognise the symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional and sexual abuse. We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the playgroup.

Planning

The layout of the playgroup will permit constant supervision of all children. Where children need to spend time away from the rest of the group, the door is left ajar.

Curriculum

- We introduce key elements of child protection into our foundation stage curriculum, so that children can develop understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the playgroup a culture of value and respect for the individual.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is appropriate for the ages and stages of our children.

Complaints

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about staff or volunteer action within the playgroup, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We follow the guidance of the Area Child Protection Committee when investigating any complaint that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a child.
- We follow the disclosure and recording procedures when investigating an allegation that a member of staff or volunteer has abused a child as if it were an allegation of abuse by any other person.

Allegations against a member of staff

- If the Child Protection Officer is not available, a member of staff should refer to Wendy Miles, the joint Supervisor for advice or assistance. All the staff at West Looe Playgroup have done basic Child Protection training and are aware of how to deal with any issues which may arise.
- Should a parent or carer feel the need to complain about the Child Protection Officer, this complaint should be made to either Wendy Miles, the joint Supervisor, or the Chair.
- The joint Supervisor or the Chair will listen to the complaint and follow the usual procedures laid out in this policy. In addition they will contact the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) who has responsibility for managing and overseeing individual allegations from across the children's workforce and providing advice to employers in this position. The Senior Safeguarding Managers for Cornwall are Jane Hampton and Karen Dale who can be contacted on 01872 254549 or jhampton@cornwall.gov.uk and kdale@cornwall.gov.uk.
- The LADO, the supervisor and the Chair will then consider:-
 - whether further details are needed to enable a decision about how to proceed and
 - how and by whom they may be gathered,
 - how and by whom the parents or carers of the child concerned should be informed of the allegation, if they are not already aware. In cases where the police or social care may need to be involved, the LADO should consult those colleagues about how best to inform parents or carers,

- how and when the accused person should be informed. This should always be done as soon as possible after consultation with the LADO, but if there is a need for a strategy discussion or it is clear that the police or social care need to be involved in the decision about what can be disclosed, the accused person should not be informed until it has been agreed by all.
- whether a strategy discussion should be called i.e. if there is cause to believe a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. If so, the LADO should contact children's care to request the strategy discussion.
- whether the allegation may constitute a criminal offence and needs to be referred to the police for investigation. If so, the LADO should immediately inform the police.
- Dependent on the outcome of these discussions, the case may be closed, the employee may be suspended, the employee may be dismissed or the employee may be taken into custody. Whatever the outcome, the playgroup will keep accurate records of what has taken place.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms – physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, this may be demonstrated through changes in their behaviour, or in their play. Where such changes in behaviour occur, or where children's play gives cause for concern, the playgroup will evidence their observations and contact the relevant bodies if appropriate.
- Staff are aware that they cannot ask children leading questions as this will potentially contaminate any future social services or police investigation.
- Where a child shows signs and symptoms of "failure to thrive" or neglect, we make appropriate referrals.

Disclosures

Where a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, that member of staff:

- Listens to the child.
- Informs the child that the member of staff will have to share the information with somebody else.
- The member of staff does not ask any leading questions.
- The member of staff writes verbatim what has been said and in what context.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosure

Staff will **NOT** make assumptions and will **NOT** investigate. Staff will make a record of:

- The child's name.
- The child's address.
- The age of the child.
- The date and time of the observation or the disclosure.
- An objective record of the observation or disclosure.
- The exact words spoken by the child.
- The name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time.
- The names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in a separate confidential file. All members of staff know the procedures for recording and reporting.

Informing Parents

Parents will normally be the first point of reference, though suspicions will also be referred as appropriate to Social Services Department. Parents will not be contacted if:

- It places a child or others at risk of harm.
- Sexual abuse, organised or multiple abuse or fabricated illness is suspected.
- It is not possible to contact parents without causing undue delay in making a referral.
- The parent is the likely abuser.

Procedure

The C.P. Officer will contact Social Services in the area in which the child lives and ask to speak to the Duty Officer (intake/Child Protection), specify that they wish to discuss possible child abuse.

If a Social Worker arranges for a child, whose name is on the Child Protection Register, to attend Playgroup, the Supervisor and the C.P. Officer should be informed in confidence that there are concerns about the child. The Supervisor/C.P. Officer should be given a named person, usually the Social Worker, to contact should the child not attend for a period of time specified or if there are other concerns.

If the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff, dialogue must be kept at a minimum. The Chair will be informed, who in turn will contact Social Services, Police and Ofsted.

Identify all circumstances, both within their role and outside work, where individual (staff member) may present a risk to other children and inform investigation agencies of this. The member of staff will be suspended from work on full pay, and if offers to resign, the Chair will **refuse** to accept it. Any evidence e.g. Logs, records, implements used within the work place, will be removed, and kept secure. If investigation is inconclusive or does result in conviction, the Chair, after discussing the matter with Ofsted and the Police, will hold an extraordinary Committee meeting where a decision will be made in respect of the staff member's future employment.

Making a Referral.

- All referrals to Social Services should be followed up in writing.
- If the child is reluctant or refuses to proceed with the allegation, you still have a duty to consider their own and other relevant children's safety and protection under the Child Protection Procedures. If in doubt, consult with the Joint Consultancy Team.

Confidentiality

All such suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential, shared only with those who need to know. The people most commonly involved will be the member of staff/Key worker, the Supervisor, the C.P. Officer, the child abuse caseworker and the Chair.

Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substances

Parents or carers who appear to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances will not be permitted to take their child(ren) home and an alternative carer or Social Services will be contacted.

Support to families

- The Playgroup will take every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relationships between families and staff in the group.
- Where abuse at home is suspected, the Playgroup will continue to welcome the child and family while investigations proceed.
- Confidential records kept on a child will be shared with the child's parents if appropriate .
- With the proviso that the care and safety of the child must always be paramount, the Playgroup will do all in its power to support and work with the child's family.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the Playgroup held on 21st April 2008 and contact details were amended following discussion at the committee meeting of 15th January 2009.