

# Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

## **1. CHILD PROTECTION ETHOS**

We at Bunnahone Bunnies Cross Community Playgroup have a responsibility for the Pastoral Care, general welfare and safety of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff and volunteers should be alert to signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our playschool.

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and Volume Two of the guidance and regulations associated with the Order. In addition, the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance 'Pastoral Care in Schools — Child Protection' (DENI 2 Sept. 2014), and the DHSSPS (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety) Minimum Standards (July 2012) state 'safeguarding children is afforded the highest priority'.

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy.

- It is a child's right to feel safe at all times, to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. We have a pastoral responsibility towards the children in our care and should take all reasonable steps to ensure their welfare in safeguarded and their safety is preserved.
- In any incident the child's welfare must be paramount, this overrides all other considerations.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents and families; but where there is conflict the child's interest must always come first.

## **3. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

The school has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Managing Children's Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying
- Special Educational Needs
- Health and Safety
- E-Safety, Networking, and Mobile Phones
- Healthy Eating
- Toileting
- Whistleblowing

**These policies are available to parents and any parent who does not already have a copy should contact the playschool.**

#### **4. SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

The following are members of the schools Safeguarding team

- Chair of Management Committee
- Designated Child Protection Officer

#### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **5.1 The Chair of the Management Committee**

The Chair of the Management Committee:

- Ensure that a safeguarding ethos is maintained within the playschool environment
- Ensure that the playschool has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy.
- Ensure that the Safeguarding team undertake appropriate child protection training.
- Ensure that a Designated Officer is available at all times.
- Assume lead responsibility for managing any compliant/allegation against the playschool leader.
- Ensure that the Management Committee receives a full written annual report in relation to child protection activity.

##### **5.2 The Management Committee**

The Management Committee must ensure:

- That the playschool has a Child Protection Policy in place and that staff implement the policy.
- Relevant Child Protection training is kept up-to-date and a record kept of the same.
- That confidentiality is paramount. Information should only be passed on a need-to-know basis.

##### **5.3 The Leader**

The leader must ensure that:

- “Pastoral Care in Schools — Child Protection” (DENI 2 Sept. 2014) is implemented within the playschool
- a designated officer and deputy are appointed
- all staff receive child protection training

- all necessary referrals are taken forward in the appropriate manner
- the Chairman of the Management Committee is kept informed
- the 'safeguarding/child protection policy' is reviewed annually and that parents/carers are aware of the availability of the policy
- confidentiality is paramount, information should only be passed to the entire Management Committee on a need-to-know basis.

#### **5.4 The Designated Officer (and Deputy)**

The designated officer and deputy must:

- Avail of training so that they are aware of duties, responsibilities and role
- Organise training for all staff
- Lead in the development of the playschool's Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy
- Act as a point of contact for staff (and parents)
- Assist in the drafting and issuing of the summary of our Child Protection arrangements for parents
- Make referrals to Social Services (Gateway team) or PSNI Public Protection Unit where appropriate
- Maintain records of all child protection concerns
- Provide written annual report to the Management Committee

#### **5.5 Staff**

Staff see children over long periods and can notice physical, behavioural and emotional indicators and hear allegations of abuse. The member of staff must:

- refer concerns to the Designated/Deputy Officer for Child Protection
- listen to what is being said and support the child
- act promptly
- make a concise written record of a child's disclosure using the actual words of the child
- avail of training and relevant other training regarding safeguarding children
- NOT give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their *disclosures*
- NOT investigate

#### **5.6 The Parents**

Parents should play their part in Child Protection by:

- telephoning the playschool on the morning of their child's absence, so as the playschool is reassured as to the child's situation

- informing the playschool whenever anyone, other than those listed already listed, intends to pick up the child after playschool
- letting the playschool know in advance if their child is going home to an address other than their own home
- familiarising themselves with the playschool's Child Protection Policy and other relevant policies
- reporting to staff when they visit the playschool
- raising concerns they have in relation to their child with the playschool.

## 6. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from the Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures (2005).

### 6.1 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings, in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. The procedures outlined in this document are intended to safeguard children who are at risk of significant harm because of abuse or neglect by a parent, carer or other with a duty of care towards a child.

### 6.2 Types of Abuse

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to the appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

**Physical Abuse** is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that he is worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as he meets the needs of the other person. It may involve causing a child to frequently feel frightened or in danger or the exploitation or corruption of a child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose a child to emotional abuse.

**Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or 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. A child may suffer or be at risk of suffering from one or more types of abuse and abuse may take place on a single occasion or may occur repeatedly over time.

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS IN RELATION TO CHILD ABUSE**

### **7.1 How a Parent can make a Complaint**

At Bunnahone Bunnies Cross Community Playgroup we aim to work closely with the parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of the child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner. If a parent has a concern, they can talk to the Designated Officer for child protection. At any time, a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart displayed near the entrance.

### **7.2 Where the playschool has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of the playschool staff**

Where staff become aware of concerns or are approached by a child they should not investigate — this is a matter for the Social Services — but should report these concerns immediately to the designated officer, discuss the matter with them and make full notes. These notes or records should be factual, objective nature and include what was seen, said, heard or reported, the place and time of who was present and should be given to the designated officer. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

The designated officer will decide whether in the best interest of the child the matter needs to be referred to the Social Services. If there are concerns that the child may be at risk, the playschool is obliged to make a referral. Unless there are concerns that a parent may be the possible abuser, the parent will be informed immediately.

The designated officer may need to seek discreet preliminary clarification from the person making the complaint or giving the information or from others who may have relevant information. The designated officer may also consult with the playschool's Social Worker. No decision to refer a case to Social Services will be made without the fullest consideration and on appropriate advice. The safety of the child is our prime priority. Where a referral needs to be made the designated officer will telephone the Western Health & Social Services Gateway Team. A UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form will also be completed and forwarded to the Gateway team.

<u>Do's</u>	<u>Don't</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen, hear and believe</li> <li>• Stay calm</li> <li>• Explain to the child that you cannot keep it a secret</li>   <li>• Reassure &amp; explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed.</li> <li>• Record accurately</li> <li>• Seek support for yourself</li> <li>• Act immediately in accordance with the procedure in this policy and report to the Lead Designated Officer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panic or over-react. It is extremely unlikely that the participant is in immediate danger.</li> <li>• Ask leading questions or put words into the child's mouth.</li> <li>• Ask the child to repeat the story unnecessarily.</li> <li>• Ignore the child's behaviour</li> <li>• Remove any clothing. e Delay</li> <li>• Start to investigate</li> <li>• Do nothing</li> </ul>

### **7.3 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the playschool's staff**

If a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Designated Officer (or Deputy Designated Officer if she is not available) must be informed immediately. The above procedures will apply (unless the complaint is about the Leader).

If a complaint is made against the Leader the Chairperson of the Management Committee will inform and he/she will ensure that necessary action is taken.

Where the matter is referred to Social Services the member of staff may be removed from duties involving direct contact with children (and may be suspended from duty as a precautionary measure pending investigation by the appropriate authorities). The Chairperson will be informed immediately.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff and is pursued either as a formal referral or under the education establishment's disciplinary procedures, a summary is entered on a Record of Abuse Complaints Book. This entry which will contain details of the complaint will be made available to the Management Committee at least annually.

### **7.4 Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a volunteer**

Any complaint about the conduct of a person working in the playschool in a voluntary capacity should be treated in the same manner as complaints against a person who is not on the staff, and the above procedures followed. If the Leader has any concerns that a child may be at risk, the services of the volunteer should be terminated immediately.

## **8. ATTENDANCE AT CHILD PROTECTION CASE CONFERENCE AND CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The Designated Officer/ Deputy Designated Officer may be invited to attend an initial and review Child Protection Case Conferences and/or core group meetings convened by the Health & Social Care

Trust. They will provide a written report which will be compiled following consultation with relevant staff. Feedback will be given to staff under the 'need to know' principle on a case-by-case basis. Children whose names are on the Child Protection register will be monitored and supported in accordance with the child protection plan.

## **9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held 'in confidence'. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with playschool staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

## **10. RECORD KEEPING**

All child protection records, information and confidential notes are kept in separate files in a locked file box in a locked drawer. These records are kept separate from any other information that is held on the child.

The playgroup also operates an 'Incident Book' where staff record any concerns or incidents. This book is also kept in a locked drawer. If a complaint about possible child abuse is received by the playschool and is not referred to Social Services- or if it is referred and Social Services do not place the child's name on the Child Protection Register — a record on the child's file will be permanently preserved and a confidential copy will be sent to any school to which the child subsequently transfers. If Social Services inform the playschool that a child's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a record of this fact and associated documentation from the Social Services will be maintained on the child's file while he or she continues to attend the playgroup. When the child's name is removed from the child protection register then all Social Services records will be destroyed and only the playschools records retained for permanent preservation. Should a child transfer to another school whilst their name is on the child protection register then we will inform the receiving school that his/her name is on the register and the name of the child's social worker. All Social Services records held by us in relation the child will then be destroyed. The playschool own child protection records in relation to the child will be held in secure and confidential storage for permanent preservation.

## **12. VETTING PROCEDURES**

All staff paid and unpaid, who are appointed to positions in the playschool are vetted in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

## **12. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ALL STAFF PAID OR UNPAID**

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the child in their charge must be above reproach. The playschool has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to distract from the enriching experiences children gain from positive interactions with staff.

### **13. STAFF TRAINING**

The playschool is committed to in-service training for its entire staff. Each member of staff will receive general training on Policy and Procedure with some member of staff receiving more specialised training in line with their roles and responsibilities. All staff will receive basic child protection awareness training and annual refresher training. The Designated Officer, Deputy Designated Officer and a member of the Management Committee will also attend relevant child protection training courses. When new staff or volunteers join the staff at the playschool, they are briefed on the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

### **14. THE PREVENTIVE CURRICULUM**

In the playgroup, regular 'circle time' sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among peers.

### **15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The playgroup will update this policy in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. The Management Committee will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the child protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Office. Ongoing evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the policy.

# Child Protection Reporting Concerns Flow Chart

Remember that all staff / committee have a professional responsibility to ensure any Child Protection concerns, where the safety or development of a child is of concern is ultimately referred without delay to the Western Trust's Gateway Team. Staff should follow up any concerns they have passed to the Group Leader or Designated or Deputy Designated Child Protection officers to ensure the concern has been dealt with appropriately.

If someone has cause for concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child	
<p style="text-align: center;">They must talk to the Group Leader</p> <p>Leader should go directly to the deputy Designated Child Protection Officer and together will make a decision about referring the case. Any decision to refer or not to refer should be recorded in detail on the relevant form.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Staff should always err in the side of caution if in any doubt.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">PLAYGROUP Designated Child Protection Officer (Staff) Una Treacy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Designated Child Protection Officer (Management Committee) Cora Murphy</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONTACT GATEWAY TEAM</b> 028 7131 4090 (centralised phone number)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Social Services — Linda Long (Social Worker) Enniskillen 028 66327734</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Out of Hours &amp; Public Holidays Regional Emergency Social Work Service 028 9504 9999</p>	

If staff want advice at any time they can contact the Western Trust's Early Years Team. *However this should not delay referral to the Gateway Team*