



# *The Nature Nursery Montessori Ltd*

## **Child Protection**

### **Policy Statement**

Child Protection is an integral part of our ethos and will be infused into every decision we make for the children we care for; we will endeavour to give every child the best start in life and hope to positively enhance their early year's experiences as much as possible. The happiness of all children in our care is by far our primary focus. With our available framework and guidance, we will protect their safety, health and welfare every step of their journey with us.

We write this policy to support our parents and employees in protecting children from all forms of abuse and provide guidance on freeing them from it. In Scotland, we have excellent legal frameworks to ensure that all children have equal rights and are respected.

Alongside South Lanarkshire's robust guidance on child protection  
(<https://www.childprotectionsouthlanarkshire.org.uk/>)

We also draw support from The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014), Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach, the Early Years Framework (2009), Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007; to help guide us through such delegated but serious matters.

### **Our Promise**

To support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children's health and development. Child protection is a much broader subject than the elements covered within this single policy; therefore, this document should be used in conjunction with the other nursery policies and procedures.

We follow the guidelines outlined in the **Safer Recruitment Through Better Recruitment (2016)** guidance released by the Care Inspectorate to protect the children in its care. This guidance outlines the safe protocols for recruiting staff - from screening to seeking references from a previous employer. We ensure that the protocols outlined in this guidance are replicated in the recruitment policy for each new recruitment procedure.

We are vigilant in identifying signs of abuse and reporting concerns. Our full team, trainees, and volunteers must safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Due to our many hours of care, staff are often the first to identify problems. They may well be the first people in whom children confide information that may suggest abuse.

Created By	Updated By	Date
Denise Sieyes	Denise Sieyes	02/02/2026



Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well-being of each child in our care. As such, we believe we have a duty to the children, parents, and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that comes to our attention. Staff will work with other agencies in the child's best interests, including, where needed, being part of a multi-agency team.

We value up-to-date training to keep knowledge fresh and to allow our staff to be as vigilant and confident as possible in handling any situation.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014) sets out common standards for child protection services in Scotland, making it clear that all agencies should, where appropriate, work together to respond to concerns early and effectively, and to ensure that practice is consistent and of high quality.

#### **Our Responsibilities**

At The Nature Nursery Montessori, we will have a named Child Protection Officer: Nursery Manager **Denise Sieyes**.

Displayed in the team's restroom, it clearly outlines the steps to be taken, even for minor concerns. All concerns will be treated with the same level of confidentiality and vigilance.

Documentation is essential to Child Protection to ensure all concerns/allegations are as accurate as possible. We encourage all our employees to keep their paperwork up to date and to include notes of injuries that may have occurred outside the setting.

Have open conversations about how to recognise and address signs of abuse, and ensure our employees feel comfortable responding to these situations.

We will ensure that our policies are updated regularly to align with any training or initiatives in place.

This policy will be displayed in the team's restroom and in our whistle-blowing procedure to add additional layers to children's protection, further ensuring that we all have a similar understanding of what we believe is Child Protection.

Created By	Updated By	Date
Denise Sieyes	Denise Sieyes	02/02/2026



## **Definitions of Abuse**

The Children's Act (1989) has recognised that abuse may come in forms that fall under these four categories.

**Physical abuse** is where deliberate physical harm is inflicted and can involve hitting, kicking, punching, throwing, shaking, scalding, burning, poisoning, drowning or suffocating. Physical abuse also includes where someone has deliberately caused the ill health of another through fabricated or induced illness to seek attention.

**Symptoms of physical abuse include** *unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body, cigarette burns, human bite marks, broken bones, scalds, flinching when approached or touched, reluctance to get changed, depression, withdrawn behaviour, and running away from home.* **FGM** (Female genital mutilation). Further information, legislation and guidance can be found on the NSPCC website here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>

**Emotional abuse** is when a person's emotions are deliberately ignored, taken advantage of or not met. Children need love, security, praise and recognition to grow and develop emotionally. Someone may be regarded as being emotionally abusive when they are consistently hostile, rejecting, verbally abusive or threatening towards another individual. Domestic abuse can also be regarded as a form of emotional abuse. It can include situations where inappropriate expectations are placed on an individual or when someone is prevented from having social contact with others.

**Symptoms of emotional abuse include** *neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking, withdrawn behaviour, being unable to play, fear of making mistakes, too eager to please, sudden speech disorders, self-harm, eating disorders, very low self-esteem, and developmental delay in terms of emotional progress.*

**Sexual abuse** occurs when someone is forced or enticed into taking part in sexual activities, regardless of whether they are aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can include both penetrative or non-penetrative physical contact or being made to watch sexual activities, for example, pornographic material.

**Symptoms of sexual abuse include:** *pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in or near the genital area, sexually transmitted disease, vaginal discharge or infection, stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down, pregnancy, sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, fear of being left with a specific person or group of people, sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level, sexual drawings or language, acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults*

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Denise Sieyes	Denise Sieyes	02/02/2026



**Neglect** is when there is a persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable person's basic physical or psychological needs. Neglect can cause significant harm to an individual's health and development. It can include being left unsupervised or alone for long periods, being inadequately fed or clothed, and ignoring or failing to assist with medical (e.g., failure to seek medical treatment or administer medication) or personal hygiene needs (e.g., toileting, washing, toothbrushing, etc.). Being kept in inappropriate, unsafe or unhygienic accommodation can also be viewed as neglect, as can a lack of stimulation, social contact or education.

***Signs of neglect include constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children, constantly dirty or 'smelly', loss of weight, or being constantly underweight, inappropriate clothing for the conditions, complaining of being tired all the time, not requesting medical assistance, failing to attend appointments, having few friends, and mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.***

However, there are occasions where a single traumatic event constitutes 'significant harm' to a child and must be handled with extreme care and urgency and on other occasions, a build-up of concerns or a series of incidents over time may also lead to 'significant harm' we need to seek guidance from an agency such as the care inspectorate if we feel unsure how as to how to take a concern forward and at what pace which will avoid escalating a situation which may endanger the child further.

### **If a child discloses abuse**

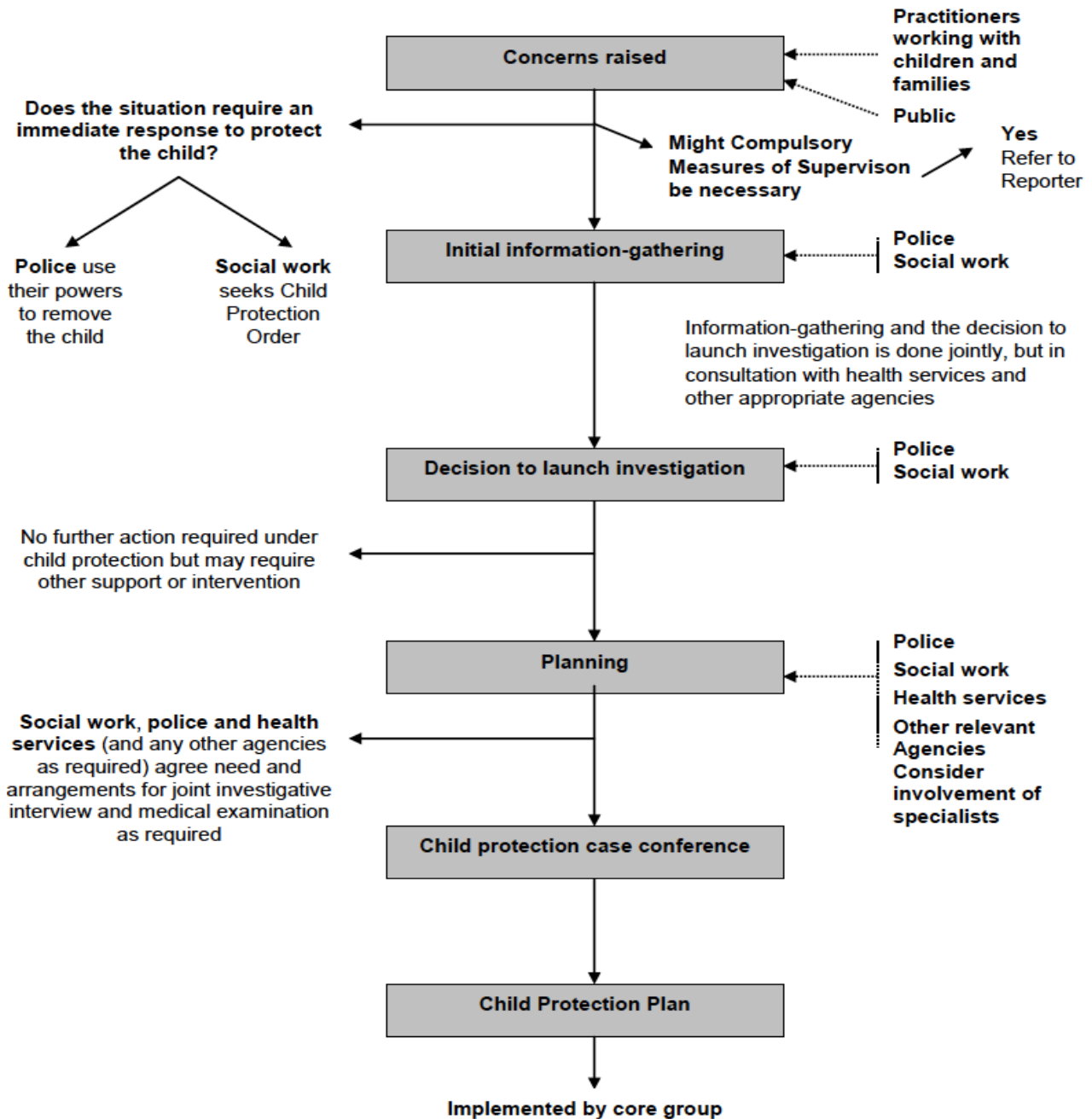
Suppose a child informs a member of our team that they or another child has been mistreated or abused. The Nature Nursery Montessori will ensure the following steps are followed:

- Show the child that you are listening, let them know that we take their allegations seriously and will do our best to help.
- Reassure them that they can feel comfortable talking to our team members. Encourage them to open up, but never prompt them or ask leading questions. We will not interrupt a child when they recall significant events or when a child repeats their account of events that have caused trauma or upset.
- Explain appropriately to the child's age and understand the actions we must take to help them.
- Record what we have been told using exact words where possible in my safeguarding/record of concerns logbook. This will include a record of the date, time, place, and any other people present at the discussion, so they can be recalled as witnesses if necessary.
- Report any concerns immediately to the Nursery Manager, who will advise me on how to address the situation and, if necessary, involve social workers and/or the police.

Created By	Updated By	Date
Denise Sieyes	Denise Sieyes	02/02/2026



Please see the table on how we will move forward with any Child Protection Concerns we may have.



<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland/pages/11/>

Created By	Updated By	Date
Denise Sieyes	Denise Sieyes	02/02/2026



## **Peer-on-peer abuse**

We are aware that peer-on-peer abuse does take place, so we include children in our policies when we talk about potential abusers. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse.

We will report this in the same way as we do for adults abusing children; each accident and incident is recorded, and both/all parents are made aware. If required, we will take advice from the appropriate bodies in this area to support both the victim and the perpetrator, as they could also be victims of abuse.

We know that children who develop harmful behaviour have often experienced abuse and neglect themselves.

Please see the Supportive Behaviour policy for further information.

## **Allegations against those working or volunteering with children**

Suppose an allegation is made against a member of staff, student, volunteer or any other person who lives or works on the nursery premises, regardless of whether the allegation relates to the nursery premises or elsewhere. In that case, we will follow the procedure below.

The Nursery Manager and the Child Protection Officer will deal with the incident.

- A full investigation will be carried out by the Child Protection Officer, alongside the nursery owner, to determine how this will be handled.
- The nursery reserves the right to suspend any member of staff during an investigation.
- All investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file for access by the relevant authorities.
- Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation, in line with the professional support and advice supplied by Peninsula, our external HR Consultant.
- Unfounded allegations will result in the reinstatement of all rights.
- Substantiated allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisation (the police) and will result in termination of employment. The Care Inspectorate will be notified immediately of this decision.
- Counselling will be available to any member of the nursery affected by an allegation, their colleagues in the nursery, and the parents.

Our nursery has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare.

Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of the nursery manager or owner.

*Please see Whistle-Blowing Policy for further details.*

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### **Extremism – the Prevent Duty**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, schools across the UK have to implement the Prevent Duty. There are currently no plans to extend it to nurseries in Scotland. However, in Scotland, concerns about a child or family can be raised with the local authority – each has a Prevent Single Point of Contact for this purpose – or with the Prevent team at the Scottish Government. The Care Inspectorate has proactively engaged with the Prevent agenda and is currently considering Prevent-related issues as part of the inspection process.

Alongside this, we will be alert to any early signs in children and families who may be at risk of radicalisation, and we will act and document all concerns when reporting further.

### **Female genital mutilation**

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed, and there is no medical reason for this. Some ethnic groups practise this form of physical abuse as a cultural ritual. When the procedure occurs depends on the community and may occur shortly after birth, during childhood, during adolescence, just before marriage, or during a woman's first pregnancy. The practice can cause severe pain, and there may be immediate and/or long-term health consequences, including mental health problems, urinary infection, septicaemia, incontinence, difficulties in childbirth, causing danger to the child and mother, and/or death.

If you have concerns about a child or family, you should contact the children's social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse. We have a mandatory duty to report to the police any case where an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18.

### **Breast Ironing**

Breast ironing, also known as "breast flattening", is the process where young girls' breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down using hard or heated objects for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction, and early forced marriage. Although this is unlikely to happen to children in the nursery due to their age, we will remain vigilant for signs and symptoms in any children and families using our services, and follow up concerns following our child protection referral process.

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### **Fabricated or induced illness**

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. The parent or carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation; they may exaggerate a real illness and symptoms or deliberately induce an illness through poisoning with medication or other substances, or they may interfere with medical treatments. Fabricated illness is a form of physical abuse, and any concerns will be reported in line with our child protection procedures.

Procedure:

- All signs of marks/injuries to a child when they come into nursery, or that occur during time at the nursery, will be recorded as soon as a staff member notices them
- The incident will be discussed with the parent at the earliest opportunity
- Such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to such records
- If there are any queries regarding the injury, it will be immediately reported to the nursery manager or person designated as the lead in child protection, who will immediately refer the matter to the local authority Child Protection Team

### **Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

CSE is defined as a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs and symptoms it may manifest as. If we have concerns, we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and record and refer as appropriate.

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## **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)**

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) can be described as when an individual, or group, takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Alongside this, we will be alert to any early signs in children and families who may be at risk of radicalisation, and we will act and document all concerns when reporting further.

- **Support to families**
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- The nursery takes every step in its power to build trusting and supportive relationships among families, staff, and volunteers within the nursery.
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- The nursery continues to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgmental manner whilst investigations are carried out in the best interests of the child.
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- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child only if appropriate, under the guidance of the Child Protection Team, with the proviso that the care and safety of the child are paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

## **Legal framework and guidance reference list**

- The Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act 2007
- Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014
- The Early Years Framework
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Children's Charter
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 201

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## **Important Telephone Numbers**

NSPCC 0808 800 5000

Social work enquiries Phone: 0303 123 1008

Social work emergency service Phone: 0303 123 1008

Police: 999

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