



Acorns Policies and Guidelines - Safeguarding Children Policy

1.1 Acorns Playgroup Safeguarding Children - Policy and Procedures

Children have the right to be protected from harm. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families/carers has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, Acorns Playgroup makes sure that their approach is child centred. This means that we always consider what is in the best interests of the child. Our Safeguarding Policy is guided by the Early Years Foundation Stage (17th July 2026), Keeping Children Safe in Education (7th July 26) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (18th March 26).

We take our responsibility seriously to protect and safeguard the welfare of all children and promote a culture of vigilance where safeguarding our children's welfare is actively advocated and the child is at the centre of everything we do. All staff are expected to show professional curiosity and express any concerns. We will:

- Maintain a professional curiosity about children and their families, being alert to any concerns or changes
- Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and provide parents and children with the opportunity to voice their concerns
- Have a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse.
- Maintain good links with statutory childcare authorities and partnerships.
- Ensure that all staff are trained in safeguarding children at least every two years, but more often if appropriate.
- Ensure that staff know about whistle-blowing procedures and what to do when they have concerns about other adults.

Our policy sets out what we will do to keep children safe

We are committed to protecting children from harm. Our policies and procedures are put in place to keep children safe and respond to child protection concerns. We are also guided by North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

THE POLICY

Acorns recognises that children can be the victims of neglect, and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, the policy has been adopted in this document (hereafter "the policy"). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against staff and volunteers, and recognises the need to build constructive links with the safeguarding partners. These guidelines have been prepared in accordance with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures. They will be kept under review annually and be supported by appropriate training at staff meetings, supervisions and annual appraisals and underpinned by regular training of all staff. The policy applies to all staff and volunteers who act on behalf of the organisation and who come directly into contact with children. Every individual has a responsibility to inform the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Catherine Kaiser**, or her deputy, **Sandra Matthews**, of concerns relating to safeguarding children. The DSL must decide if the concerns should be communicated to Children's Social Care or the police. If they are not, it should be recorded why this decision has been taken.

The aims of the Policy are;

- To provide a safe, respectful and supportive environment, which promotes a culture of safeguarding for children in which they feel confident to approach adults and are secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to.
- To ensure that children feel able to express their views and preferences, and that they have the courage and the confidence to tell any adult if they are unhappy.
- To ensure that children know that they can speak about their worries with anyone of their choice, whom they trust, both in and out of the setting.
- To ensure that adults talk and listen to children where they have concerns about their safety and well-being.
- To safeguard children who are suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.
- To ensure the children in our care are kept safe both at home and in the setting.
- To raise the awareness of all staff of their responsibility to identify and act on any suspected case of abuse or neglect, and the procedures to follow.
- To raise awareness of parents about the procedures that we will follow if abuse or neglect is suspected.

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- **We are also committed to supporting vulnerable families, as we recognise that abuse may sometimes happen where there are difficulties within families such as domestic violence, alcohol or substance abuse, homelessness or mental health issues. We support families and act in their best interests, if appropriate, in partnership with social services.**

Definitions of Child Abuse; Abuse; Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. A child may be abused or neglected by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting by those known to them or by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse; A form of abuse which 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 (factitious disorder).

Emotional Abuse; 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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a 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 (including cyber 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, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), which may not necessarily involve a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

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 abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Additional forms of abuse which staff must be alert to;

- **Peer on peer abuse;** all staff recognise that children may abuse their peers, and that this should not be tolerated or passed off as 'part of growing up'. Any allegations of peer abuse and concerns about sexual violence and sexual harassment, physical abuse, must be reported to the DSL, and NYSCP guidance and procedures must be followed. Children will always be within sight of and/or hearing of adults and adults will be alert to possibilities in order to minimise the possibility of this.
- **Racist, disability, homophobic or transphobic abuse** will be challenged and any incidents logged.
- **Bullying,** including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying
- **Criminal exploitation and county lines;** staff are aware of the possibility that families may be exploited and should be vigilant. All concerns should be reported to the DSL and NYSCP guidance must be followed.
- **child sexual exploitation** and trafficking.
- **Homelessness;** this also includes 'sofa-surfing'. Staff should be aware of any children who don't have a permanent home and ensure that their needs are being met. Staff should also be alert to any wider environmental factors in a child's life which may be a threat to their welfare or safety. Staff should maintain a professional curiosity about children's home lives.
- **Honour based, cultural or gender-based violence;** Staff should be clear around the possibility of this and that it must be reported as above. Staff are aware of illegal cultural practices such as FGM and breast ironing and alert to signs and what to look for. Also staff are aware of the possibility of radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour.
- **risks linked to using technology and social media,** including online bullying; the risks of being groomed online for exploitation or radicalisation; and risks of accessing and generating inappropriate content, for example 'sexting'
- **other issues not listed here but that pose a risk to children and their families, including violence against women and girls and Domestic Violence.** Whilst children are not likely to be victims of DV, they may well have experienced trauma from having witnessed it or living in a home where DV is a threat.
- **Extremism;** includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.



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Awareness of Abuse and Neglect;

Acorns will provide all staff with adequate regular safeguarding training in order to carry out their role and responsibilities under this policy. Individuals within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and also from other sources including abuse by members of that staff and volunteers. All members of Acorns should respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

We are as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns; however, concerns must not be discussed with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

a. delay in sharing relevant information with an appropriate person or authority would increase the risk of harm to the child, or b. asking for consent may increase the risk of harm to the child, family member, or member of staff.

What to do if children make a disclosure to an adult about abuse or neglect (including peer on peer abuse)

It is recognised that a child may choose to seek adults out to share information about abuse or neglect or talk spontaneously to individuals or in groups. All staff have had training in how to deal with disclosure. **In these situations, the adult must:**

- Listen carefully to the child but NOT directly question them and give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's presentation as well as what was said.
- Recordings must be kept secure and in accordance with organisation procedures.
- Use the child's own words where possible. Record their demeanour and anything else which is significant.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure them that they are right to have told you, they have not done anything wrong, and what you will do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child safe.
- Children should not be required to provide multiple accounts of events within the organisation

You must:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others and respect the child's right to personal privacy
- Recognise that caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children.
- Operate within Acorns principles and guidance and any specific procedures.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.

You must not:

- Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour/show favouritism to a child, or make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children.
- Reach conclusions about others without checking facts or either exaggerate or trivialise safeguarding issues.

What you should do if you suspect abuse. You may become concerned about a child for a number of reasons, for example:

- They have not spoken to you or avoid speaking to you, they are upset or because of your observations, or you are given information from another party about a child. There is a change in a child's usual demeanour.
- It is good practice to ask a child why they are upset or how an injury was caused or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify concerns and result in appropriate action. You must not lead a child eg. Asking 'did someone hit you?'
- If you are concerned about a child, you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to the **DSL or their deputy**. You should make a note of your concerns and any actions agreed following your discussion.

Informing parents; It is good practice to be open and honest at the outset with the parents/carers about concerns, and the need for a referral. All reasonable efforts should be made to inform parents/carers prior to discussing concerns with Children's Social Care; however, this should not be delayed if concerns cannot be discussed with the parents.

Where the child expresses a wish for his or her parents not to be informed, their views should be taken seriously and a judgement made based on the child's age and understanding, as to whether the child's wishes should be followed.

Consultation with Children's Social Care

Where concerns have been highlighted to the DSL or deputy, they will contact the Multi agency Screening Team (MAST) **Tel 0300 131 2131** to discuss the concerns with Children's Social Care. Please see below for contact information. You may also wish to consult with Children's Social Care in the following circumstances:

- When you have been unable to contact the DSL or DDSL and you believe the child is at risk of harm
- When you remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether safeguarding concerns exist
- When there is disagreement as to whether safeguarding concerns exist.
- When the concerns relate to any member of staff, management, students or volunteers.

Consultation is not the same as making a referral but should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to Social Services or the Police should progress.



Making a Referral to Children's Social Care Multi Agency Screening Team (MAST)

In order to make a referral to Children's Social Care, MAST should be contacted in the first instance. This will usually be by the DSL or their deputy. The Customer Contact Centre can be contacted by the following methods:

During Office Hours; By Phone: 01609 780780 or Email: Children&families@northyorks.gov.uk in Office Hours; or Emergency Duty Team (for evenings, weekends and bank holidays): 01609 780780. If it is believed that the child is at risk of significant harm, the police should be contacted on 999.

Confirmation of Referral

A written confirmation of the referral must be completed and submitted within 24 hours. This will normally be completed by the DSL. North Yorkshire's CYPs request that the Referral form available from www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk is used, to ensure that the referral can be progressed as effectively as possible. When contacting social care the DSL should:

- Clearly identify themselves, their agency/relationship with the child(ren) and family and Acorns contact details.
- Provide as much relevant family information as possible and, clearly stating the name of the child, the parents/carers and any other children known to be in the household, the dates of birth and addresses and any previous addresses known
- Provide details of any special needs or communication needs of either the child or any family member
- State why they feel the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.
- Share their knowledge and involvement of the child(ren) and family and share their knowledge of any other agency involved
- Indicate the child's, parent's/carer's knowledge of the referral and their expectations
- Ensure they record the concerns and action taken

We aim to create a culture of safeguarding where the safety of children is at the heart of everything we do. We make it clear to ALL staff, volunteers, students, parents and carers that Acorns is committed to protecting children through all its practices.

Responsibilities;

The registered person; The registered person at Acorns is also the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- The registered person will monitor and audit our safeguarding arrangements through the use of NYSCP Safeguarding Audit Tool, at least every two years.
- There will be an annual review of policies and procedures. This will include a scrutiny of the completed welfare check lists for child protection, and suitable people, a review of training (including safer Recruitment training) and our single central record of staff, students and volunteers.
- The DSL will evaluate that the safeguarding policy is effective and that NYSCP procedures are being followed and that staff are equipped to fulfil their role in this.
- is responsible for ensuring that any allegations against persons working in the setting, are dealt with effectively.
- is also responsible for ensuring that new starters, including students and volunteers, receive a comprehensive induction.
- ensures that staff have opportunities to discuss welfare concerns, and identify any training needs, keeping an updated record of training.

The registered person will inform Ofsted of;

- Changes to the person who is managing the provision and changes to the name or registered number of the company, changes to the nominated person, any new person's name, date of birth, full name, former names, or aliases used by them, and their full address, any change to the name or address of any person mentioned above. They will also inform Ofsted of any cases of food poisoning affecting 2 or more children looked after on the premises, any serious accident or injury to, or serious illness of, or the death of any child while in our care, and any action taken. **Ofsted Tel. number is 0300 123 1231**
- Any allegation of **serious harm against, or abuse of, a child by any person looking after children on the premises** (whether that allegation relates to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere,) or by the registered person or any person living, working or employed on the premises, or any other abuse which is alleged to have taken place on the premises, and the action taken in respect of these allegations; any other significant event that is likely to affect the suitability to look after children of the registered person or any person caring for children on the premises.
- **All staff are asked to sign an annual declaration stating that they are suitable to look after children (Appendix G). This requires that they declare any convictions, cautions or bind-overs, including those regarded as spent.** This will also include referral to or inclusion on the DBS Barred List, restricting or preventing them from working with children.



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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Acorns' Designated safeguarding Lead is Catherine Kaiser. She can be contacted on 07952 963186.

This information is displayed in the setting and on our website, so that it is clear who should be contacted about any concerns. In her absence, her deputy is Sandra Matthews (07952 963186).

The role and responsibilities of the DLP include;

- Liaising with parents in safeguarding matters, keeping them updated of actions taken, unless to do so would put the child at risk of harm.
- Referring a child to Children's Social Care if there are any concerns about abuse or neglect. Any referral will be made by telephone and then followed up in writing within 24 hours.
- Ensuring that everyone who has contact with children at Acorns is suitable to do so, including Safer Recruitment practices.
- Liaising with other agencies and services, attending multi-agency child protection conferences, contributing to a Child Protection or Child in Need plan.
- Ensuring that all practitioners are aware of the setting's Safeguarding Policy and that training is updated (either by attending training courses, reviews of updates from courses, yearly appraisals to assess knowledge and understanding, or through annual e-training).
- Keeping and storing records and passing them on to the child's next setting following agreed procedure, and recording this.
- Keeping her own knowledge of safeguarding procedure and practice up to date. Completing level 2 training every three years and keeping Safer Recruitment training updated.
- Ensuring that the setting's safeguarding policy is kept up to date.
- Recording and reporting any concerns and recording the reasons why action was or wasn't taken.

Both DSL and deputy have a level 2 or 3 safeguarding certificates and have completed Safer Recruitment Training at Level 2. They attend North Yorkshire SCP Safeguarding training regularly, to stay updated.

Responsibilities of all the staff team (including students and volunteers)

- All staff must follow the NYSCP guidance and procedures which are consistent with 'Working together to safeguard children' (2018). Staff are **not** responsible for investigating concerns or determining the truth of any allegation or disclosure.
- All staff have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind.
- All concerns regarding the welfare of children must be recorded and discussed with the DSL *prior* to discussion with parents.

All staff must immediately report;

- Any suspicion that a child is injured, marked or bruised in a way which is not readily attributable to knocks or scrapes received in play.
- Any explanation given which appears inconsistent or suspicious.
- Any behaviours which give rise to suspicions that a child may have suffered harm (eg. Worrying drawings or play).
- Any concerns that a child may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment or emotional maltreatment.
- Any concern that a child is presenting signs of symptoms of abuse or neglect or any significant changes in a child's presentation, including non-attendance or patterns of non-attendance.
- Any hint of disclosure of abuse from any person.
- Any concern regarding person/s who may pose a risk to children eg. Living in a household with a child present.
- Concerns over parents' mental health or serious suspicion of drug or alcohol abuse.
- Concerns over domestic violence and additional safeguarding concerns as described on page 3.
- Any concern regarding persons who may pose a risk to children who are working in the setting, including;
 - failure to follow setting policies and procedures including guidance for Safer Working Practice NYCC 2014.
 - inappropriate conduct eg. Inappropriate sexual comments and behaviours.
 - excessive one to one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities.
 - taking of and/or sharing child abuse images.

Staff should be aware of NSPCC information on grooming and entrapment on www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforteachers/good-practice/protecting-children-from-grooming_wdf90566.pdf.

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Training, Support and Supervision

- The DSL and deputy DSL keep their safeguarding training updated at a minimum of every two years. All other members of staff have completed level 2 child protection training every two years. The DSL and deputy have both completed Safer Recruitment training.
- Whenever staff attend training, they provide a summary for colleagues of their learning. When this relates to safeguarding, the summary is recorded in half-termly staff meetings.
- At annual appraisals, training requirements for safeguarding are discussed, and courses booked as required, or any gaps in knowledge are addressed through the DSL or manager.
- New staff, students and volunteers have a systematic and formal induction which covers the safeguarding policy. They sign to say that they have received and understood their induction.
- In-house training takes place at all staff meetings as any updates, including serious case reviews, are released. Safeguarding policy is regularly discussed and reviewed, formally every two years, but changed immediately when amendments are required.
- Staff are encouraged to speak to the DSL or DDSL about any concerns at all about their key children or other children's welfare. They are aware that they can also discuss concerns over colleagues and made aware of the whistle-blowing policy. Safeguarding is discussed at every appraisal and supervision meeting.
- We recognise the stress which dealing with child protection may cause and would enable staff to receive emotional support either from within the setting or externally.

Record Keeping and Information Sharing;

In order to keep children safe, Acorns keeps accurate up to date records. This includes information about previous child protection concerns and records of who may collect the child. The DSL is responsible for keeping records about any concerns, even if it is not appropriate to make an immediate referral. These records should include;

- Statements, facts and observable things (what was seen/heard), a diagram (not photographs) of any injuries indicating position, size and colour. Words the child uses (not translated into adult-speech) and non-verbal behaviours.
- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), or where 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 must:

- listen to the child, offers reassurance and give assurance that they will take action but that someone else will be informed.
- Does not show shock, horror or surprise.
- Does not express judgement regarding the alleged abuser.
- Tries to ensure that the child making a disclosure does not have to speak to another member of staff.
- sensitively clarify the information.
- keep questions to a minimum and of an open-ended nature eg. Can you tell me what happened? **NOT** did X hit you?
- Explains sensitively what will happen next and explain that only those who 'need to know' will be told.
- 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 date and time, and the names of any other person present at the time.

A referral will always be made where there are concerns about significant harm, including where the child is already an open case to CSC eg. A Looked after child, where the child is the subject of a CAF, has additional needs, or is already subject to assessment and intervention.

- These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file which is kept securely and confidentially.
- Records about child protection will be kept away from the child's normal records. They will be kept in a locked file only accessible to the DSL and deputy, which will be stored in our lockable cabinet.
- The information will be kept confidential and shared on a 'need to know' basis. In a small setting such as Acorns, where practitioners are also co-owners and therefore part of the setting's management, ensuring children's safety means that it is likely that safeguarding information will be sensitively shared between the owners and key person, but not volunteers, students or other staff (unless this is to ensure a child's safety).

Transitions to new settings;

Safeguarding information will be photocopied and passed on to the child's next provision (school or other early years setting) in a file marked "Child Protection – Confidential, For the attention of the DSL" for Child Protection (early years) or Designated Senior Person (schools). Records will be kept until the child's 25th birthday. Records may be passed on to Ofsted in order to safeguard children.

Wherever possible we will work in partnership with parents and aim to share any records made. However, if it was felt that sharing these records would put the child at further risk of harm, they will not be shared. Children's welfare will be the overriding consideration.



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Procedure followed in the case of suspected abuse or neglect;

If abuse or neglect is suspected the DSL should be informed. Whatever the safeguarding concerns, Acorns staff will always work positively and non-judgementally with parents in order to support the child and their family to achieve the best outcomes. The DSL will;

- Decide firstly if the child has any urgent medical needs.
- Make enquiries to Children's Social Care and any other agencies involved with the family, on **01609 780780**
- Seek advice from the MAST, who will consider child's wishes and any fears or concerns they may have.

Then it will be decided;

- Whether to talk to parents, unless to do so may place the child at significant harm, impede any police investigation and/or place the member of staff or others at risk.
- Whether to make a child protection referral to children's social care because a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, and if this needs to be undertaken immediately (including when the child is already an open case to CSC eg. A looked after child).

OR

- Not to make a referral at this stage, whether further monitoring is necessary.
- If it would be appropriate to undertake an Early Help Assessment or make a referral to other services.

If anyone is concerned that the DSL or manager are not taking concerns sufficiently seriously, or taking appropriate action, they must contact the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) on 01609 534974/07715 540723, Ofsted direct on 0300 123 1231 or 0300 1234 666. If the concern is over someone working with children, they should contact the above numbers directly.

All information and actions taken, including the reasons for any decisions made, should be fully documented.

All referrals to social care are accompanied by a standard referral form.

In cases where the setting disagrees with decisions made by others, then they must follow the NYSCP procedures in order to ensure that children are safeguarded.

Making a referral to the local authority social care team

- Referrals are made in accordance with the Local Authority guidance.
- A NYSCP referral form will be used to record all information passed on.
- Any referral by telephone will be followed up in writing within 48 hours. Ofsted will be informed via email immediately.

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. The DSL will be responsible for this aspect.
- If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership does not allow this. This will be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases, the investigating officers will inform parents.

Liaison with other agencies (see 1.3 Information sharing)

- We work within the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines.
- We have a copy of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' for parents and staff, and all staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, and telephone numbers of social care, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and social services to work well together. This can be found on the wall inside the cupboard door.
- We notify the registration authority (Ofsted) of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the wellbeing of children.

Acorns is committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur, and to working with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' HM Government 2026.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

Suitable People;

We ensure that anyone who has access to children on our premises is suitable to do so. We do this through;

- Our **Safer Recruitment Policy – See Safeguarding Policy Section 1.11**. This is rigorously followed when recruiting staff members, as well as for the induction of students and volunteers.



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- All staff, students and volunteers have DBS checks carried out on them. No adults will work with children until they have received a clear enhanced DBS check. All staff are on the DBS update system.
- Staff are contractually obliged to disclose any police action taken against them and any circumstances which could lead to consideration of disqualification (EYFS p15 3.11)
- We are committed to making referrals to the DBS and providing Ofsted with any relevant information indicating that any person meets the grounds for disqualification from Childcare.
- We will not employ anyone who is either on a DBS barred list or is Disqualified from Childcare.
- Staff are required to inform the DSL if there are any changes which would mean that they are unsuitable to work with children. They make an annual declaration of this.

Due consideration is given to Managing Allegations Against Those Who Work or Volunteer with Children

www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/procedures-practice-guidance-and-one-minute-guides/managing-allegations-against-those-who-work-or-volunteer-with-children/

Whistle-blowing;

We build an open and honest culture, where staff feel free to question practice and look for improvements. If any member of staff, student or volunteer feels that they must make a whistleblowing allegation of bad practice or illegality against another member of staff, student or volunteer, we make it clear that they can do this safely without fear of retaliation, and that any complaint will be handled sensitively, in confidence and according to clear procedures.

Whistleblowing may include any of the following;

Safeguarding - Unsafe or concerning practice which could put a child at risk of harm.

Criminal Activity – deliberate abuse, theft or fraudulent activity.

Health and Safety violations – putting children at risk through not following legal guidance, e.g. breaching EYFS welfare ration requirements.

Discriminatory Practice - Failure to challenge racist behaviour or discriminatory practice.

Conspiracies or attempts to cover-up any of the above.

Definition of 'allegation' – the term allegation means where it is alleged that a person who works with children has;

-behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child

-possibly committed a criminal offence against or relating to a child, or

-behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she may pose a risk of harm to children.

Whistle-blowing definition

This is the mechanism by which staff, students or volunteers can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Staff are responsible for bringing matters of concern to the attention of the management and/or external agencies. This is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

See Whistleblowing guidance on the NYSCP website for guidance <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/procedures-practice-guidance-and-one-minute-guides/whistleblowing/>

Staff, including students and volunteers, can raise a concern about poor or unsafe practices in the provision's safeguarding regime i.e. whistleblowing. This can be through Ofsted or NSPCC:-

Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155, Email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk.

Procedure; Staff must

- Report any behaviour from colleagues which raises concerns to the DSL (unless the allegation is made against the DSL, then the concern should be made to the setting manager who is the deputy DSL).
- Report any allegations against staff to the LADO and Ofsted.
- The procedures described as above under **allegations against staff** will be followed.

Procedures set out in our policies and guidelines safeguard children and protect staff from allegations. These procedures are;

- Ensuring that no member of staff, student or volunteer works alone with children, out of either the sight or hearing of others.
- The setting's Behaviour Policy is followed by adults at all times. See our Achieving Positive Behaviour Policy (2.2).
- Toileting will be carried out with the bathroom door open. Personal care is recorded so that we always know who has looked after a child. Anything out of the ordinary should be recorded.
- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff, students or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others. We ensure that students and volunteers are aware of this and remind them to keep themselves safe from the possibility of allegations.



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The registered person, **Catherine Kaiser**, is responsible for dealing with allegations against any person working or volunteering at Acorns. We follow NYSCB 'Guidance for Safe Working Practice in Early Years Settings'. ALL staff behaviour should be transparent.

Staff are expected to report any concerns and make reference to our Complaints Procedure (1.9) and Whistle-blowing Policy.

Allegations against a member of staff;

Child protection procedures are slightly different to those described above, if an allegation is made against a member of staff, or any person working at the setting. Allegations against staff will be handled by the registered person or manager.

If the allegation is against either the registered person or the manager;

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be contacted directly on 01609 533080, or lado@northyorks.gov.uk (this includes allegations from members of staff), if they feel that a concern is not being dealt with adequately, or if they do not feel that they can raise concerns with the setting management. Anyone may contact Ofsted directly on 0300 123 1231.

Should an allegation be made against a member of staff, we will apply the same principles as in the rest of the policy, and always follow NYSCP procedures and the guidance set out in 'Guidance for staff facing an allegation'.

- Detailed records will be kept, to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these.
- Any allegation will be investigated properly following NYSCP procedure. We will also follow the guidance in the NYCC documents 'Definitions and Thresholds for Managing Allegations Against Staff', 'Guidance for Staff Facing an Allegation' and 'Managing the Aftermath of Unfounded and Unsubstantiated Allegations'.

All allegations will be investigated properly and in line with agreed procedures.

Investigations into allegations against people who work with children may have up to four related strands;

- Enquiries by Children's Social Care and/or the Police and Ofsted.
- Investigation by the employer under staff disciplinary procedures (see our Disciplinary Policy and Procedures).

Procedure;

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting, or anyone working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- The person who has received an allegation or witnessed an event will immediately inform the DSL (or Deputy if the complaint is against the DSL), who will record the details of the allegation.
- The DSL will take steps to ensure the immediate safety of children and any urgent medical attention needed.
- The DSL will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to seek advice on moving forward with the investigation. The setting staff will cooperate with any investigating agencies. This will inform the decision as to whether the member of staff should be suspended whilst the investigation takes place. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-about-childrens-social-care-services-to-ofsted/sharing-concerns-and-information-with-ofsted-about-childrens-social-care-services>
- **Any allegation will be reported to Ofsted within 48 hours. Failure to do so is a criminal offence.**
- Consideration must be made throughout to the emotional needs of children, parents and staff.
- **We will inform Ofsted of any allegation of serious harm or abuse of a child by any person, including volunteers, looking after children on the premises**, (whether that allegation relates to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere,) or by the registered person, or any person working or employed on the premises, and the action taken in respect of these allegations, as soon as reasonably practical, but at the latest, within 14 days. Failure to do so without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence. We will also inform the LADO and NYSCP or the police, without delay.
- **If the whistleblower is concerned that the allegation is not being followed up, they should inform the LADO, Ofsted or the police.**

We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by children's social care in conjunction with the police or Ofsted.

Where the management and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff will be suspended on full pay, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process.

Local authority guidance is available in the appendices of our policies files.

As with any child protection matter, the situation will be dealt with confidentially and information shared on a need-to-know basis.

Disciplinary action

Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the setting because of misconduct relating to a child, we notify the DBS administrators so that the name may be included on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Barred List.

Confidentiality

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership. All staff, students and volunteers are made aware of the setting's Confidentiality Policy. Records are kept away from children's personal records and stored in an initialled file in a locked cabinet.



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Support to families

- We believe in building open, trusting and supportive relationships with families.
- We make clear to parents, carers, students and volunteers, our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the local children's social care team.
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child and shared only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Additional Information:

Our 'Safer Recruitment' Policy is available in the Safeguarding Policy section 1.11

- We abide by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for safeguarding reasons.
- We ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. We have effective systems in place to ensure that any person who is likely to have regular contact with children are suitable.
- At staff appraisals and supervisions, each six months, staff are asked whether there are any changes to their personal circumstances which may affect their suitability to look after children. Staff are registered for DBS updates.

Child welfare files: We will maintain and monitor a **Child Welfare File for any child about whom other welfare concerns have been raised, for example those who are known to CSC, children who are 'Looked after' or who have been part of a CAF.** This will be separate from the child's personal file and separate to any child protection file held. These will be maintained by the manager, or DSL if relating to safeguarding. The manager will also keep a register of all children for whom welfare files are being kept, which indicate the reason for keeping the file, and whether parental consent has been gained to maintain the file. The welfare file includes;

- An indication as to whether a separate child protection file is being kept.
- Any relevant assessments including CAF, initial core assessment, psychologist, EY advisory teacher.
- Education and health care plan, Personal Education Plans or documents relating to the child's SEN.
- Any information relating to the child's behaviour and attendance.
- Minutes or notes of any meetings/contacts with parents, including home visits, telephone calls, texts or emails. Including date/time, who the contact was with, record of discussion, outcomes and actions to be taken. Similarly notes will be taken of meetings with other professionals.
- Documents relating to any other welfare concerns eg. Key person notes, signed records of discussions.
- Information in children's welfare files must be shared with relevant staff on a 'need to know' basis. Parents' rights to privacy must be respected. Information should not be shared unless the setting has permission to do so.
- We would always share any concerns with parents, unless to do so may place the child at risk of significant harm.

Welfare files must be forwarded to the next setting or school with parental consent.

Staff will never be under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the setting. Any medication which might affect a staff member's ability to care for children effectively must be declared and medical advice must be sought. They will not be allowed to work directly with the children unsupervised unless they are deemed fit to do so by a doctor.

**Contact Numbers; NY Children's Social Care team; 01609 535070 Emergency Duty Team; 0300 131 2 131
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO); 01609 533080 Ofsted; 0300 123 4666.**

This guidance and all other sections of our safeguarding policy is written with reference to the following publications and frameworks;

Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage – setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five (September 2026). Section 3 – The safeguarding and welfare requirements Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 Working together to safeguard children – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

What To Do If You Are Worried A Child Is Being Abused – Advice for Practitioners 2015 Stat guidance template (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2026 Education inspection framework (EIF) – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



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Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision 2026 Early years inspection handbook – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales 2023 Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales (accessible)

Worried about a child? Make a referral NYSCP (safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

NYSCP Framework for decision making (Threshold Guidance) NYSCP (safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Considerations for Managers 2019 Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP)

All staff must be aware of NYC's Early Help strategy and how to complete an Early Help Assessment Form NYSCP (safeguardingchildren.co.uk).

The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004), Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) The Equality Act (2010)

Secondary legislation; Sexual Offences Act (2003) Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)

Human Rights Act (1999)

Data Protection Act (1998) Non-Statutory Guidance GDPR (2018)

Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

1.2 safeguarding children – Looked After Children

Policy statement

Children who are Looked After by the Local Authority will have a separate 'Welfare file'. (See safeguarding Policy 1.1)

Acorns is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff are committed to doing all they can to enable looked after children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential. (See also 1.1 Safeguarding – key commitment for children who already have an open case with CSC)

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

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations and we aim to provide trauma informed practice. Their trauma may be either suffering from, or witnessing, physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken into the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has impact on their emotional well-being.

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

Principles

- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.

Procedures

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator, Catherine Kaiser.
- The designated person and the key person liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family, and ensures appropriate information is gathered and shared.
- The setting recognises the role of the local authority social care department as the child's 'corporate parent' and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parents' or foster carers' role in relation to the setting without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- At the start of a placement there is a meeting of professionals that will determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.

The care plan needs to consider such issues for the child as:

- the child's emotional needs and how they are to be met;
- how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed

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- the child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – how this is to be supported
- the child's need for sociability and friendship;
- the child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway; and
- how any special needs will be supported.

In addition the care plan will also consider:

- how information will be shared with the foster carer, the child's parents and local authority (as the 'corporate parent') as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored;
- what contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed;
- what written reporting is required;

wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child's return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning; and with the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings, fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.

- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the 'proximity' stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a relationship with his or her key person sufficient to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.
- In the first two weeks after settling-in, the child's well-being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support. Further observations about communication, interests and abilities will be noted to form a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning.
- Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
- If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social care worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.

Further guidance

- Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)
- Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES 2005)
- Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

1.3 Safeguarding children - Information sharing

"Ensuring that children and young people are kept safe and receive the best support they need when they need it is vital. Where information sharing is necessary to achieve this objective, it is important that the practitioners have a clear understanding of when information can be shared. It is also for them to understand the circumstances of when sharing is inappropriate." Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner. The Data Protection Act (2018) is not a barrier to sharing information but is in place to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately.

Policy statement; We recognise that parents have a right to know that information they share will be regarded as confidential as well as being informed about the circumstances, and reasons, when we are obliged to share information. We are obliged to share confidential information without authorisation from the person who provided it or to whom it relates if it is in the public interest. That is when:

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

The decision should never be made as an individual, but with the back-up of the co-owners. The three critical criteria are:

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

Procedures

1. Explain to families how, when and why information will be shared about them and with whom. That consent is normally obtained, unless it puts the child at risk or undermines a criminal investigation
 - We ensure parents receive information about our information sharing policy when starting their child in the setting.
 - We ensure parents have information about our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy.
 - We ensure parents have information about the circumstances when information will be shared with external agencies for example with regard to any special needs the child may have or transition to school.
2. Consider the safety and welfare of the child when making a decision about sharing information – if there are concerns regarding 'significant harm' the child's well being and safety is paramount.
 - We record concerns and discuss these with the setting's *designated person* for child protection matters. Record decisions made and the reasons why information will be shared and to whom.
 - We follow the procedures for reporting concerns and record keeping.

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- We seek advice when there are doubts about possible significant harm to a child or others.
- Managers contact children's social care for advice where they have doubts or are unsure.
- 3. Information shared should be accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose it is being shared for and shared only with those who need to know and shared securely.

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

- 4. Reasons for decisions to share information, or not, are recorded. Provision for this is set out in our record keeping policy

Consent - Parents have a right to be informed that their consent to share information will be sought in most cases, as well as the kinds of circumstances when their consent may not be sought, or their refusal to give consent overridden.

- Our policies and procedures set out our responsibility regarding gaining consent to share information and when it may not be sought or overridden.
- We cover this verbally when the child starts or include this in our contract.
- Parents sign a form at registration to say they understand this and copies are given to parents of the forms they sign.
- Parents are asked to give written consent to share information about any additional needs their child may have, or to pass on child development summaries to the next provider/school.

We consider the following questions:

- Is there legitimate purpose to sharing the information? Does the information enable the person to be identified?
- Is the information confidential? If the information is confidential, do you have consent to share?
- Is there a statutory duty or court order to share information?
- If consent is refused, or there are good reasons not to seek consent, is there sufficient public interest to share information?
- If the decision is to share, is the information shared in the right way? Has the decision been recorded?

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please also see our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy.

1.4 Safeguarding Children - Confidentiality and client access to records

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

In our setting, staff and managers can be said to have a confidential relationship with families. It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents and carers, while ensuring that they access high quality early years care and education. We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children. There are record keeping systems in place that meet legal requirements; means of storing and sharing that information take place within the framework of the GDPR (2018) and the Human Rights Act (1998).

Confidentiality procedures

- We always check whether parents regard the information they share with us to be regarded as confidential or not.
- Some parents share information about themselves with other parents as well as staff; the setting cannot be held responsible if information is shared beyond those parents whom the person has confided in.
- Computers which store personal records are password protected. Records are kept in a lockable cupboard when the setting is closed.
- Safeguarding records are marked private and confidential and kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- Staff, students and volunteers all have the importance of client confidentiality explained to them on induction. Breaches of confidentiality are considered gross misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action (see Disciplinary Policy.)
- Information shared between parents in a discussion or training group is usually bound by a shared agreement that the information is confidential to the group and not discussed outside of it.
- We inform parents when we need to record confidential information beyond the general personal information we keep (see our record keeping procedures) - for example with regard to any injuries, concerns or changes in relation to the child or the family, any discussions with parents on sensitive matters, any records we are obliged to keep regarding action taken in respect of child protection and any contact and correspondence with external agencies in relation to their child.
- Learning records or developmental file are on the premises for easy access, however all parents are informed that they must only look at or borrow their own child's book. They are kept in full view of staff at all times.

Client access to records procedures; Parents may request access to confidential records held on their child as follows;

- Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the setting leader or manager.
- Acorns commits to providing access within 14 days, although this may be extended whilst the manager prepares the file for viewing.
- All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. Copies of these letters are retained on file. 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records.
- It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority, etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to them.



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- When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter. A photocopy of the complete file is taken.
- The setting leader goes through the file and removes any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
- What remains is the information recorded by the setting, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'.
- The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parents who are then invited in to discuss the contents. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the setting leader, so that it can be explained.
- Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent has possible grounds for litigation against the setting or another (third party) agency.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please see also our policy on child protection.

Legal framework GDPR Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998

1.5 Safeguarding Children - Uncollected children

Policy statement

If a child is not collected by an authorised adult at the end of a session/day, the setting puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the child is cared for safely by experienced and qualified practitioners who are known to them. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible.

We inform parents/carers of our procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their child will be properly cared for. The procedures are set out clearly in our contract and parents sign to say that they agree to them.

Procedures; Parents of children starting at the setting are asked to provide the following specific information which is recorded on our Registration Form:

- Home address and telephone numbers – also place of work, address and telephone number (if applicable).
- We request a minimum of two emergency contacts and check that these are up to date each term.
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting, for example a childminder or grandparent.
- All adults who have parental responsibility for the child.
- Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child.
- On occasions when parents or the persons normally authorised to collect the child are not able to collect them, they provide us with written details of the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting their child. We agree with parents how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect their child and agree a confidential password.
- Parents are informed that if they are not able to collect the child as planned, they must inform us so that we can begin to take back-up measures. We provide parents with our contact telephone number.
- We inform parents that we apply our child protection procedures as set out in our child protection policy in the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult **1 hour** after the setting has closed or the end of the booked session.

If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day, we follow the following procedures:

- The child's file and our diary are checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines.
- If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or at work. If all contact attempts are unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting - and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the Registration Form - are contacted. All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or carers.
- The child does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or in their file.
- If no-one collects the child after 1 hour from normal end of session, and there is no-one who can be contacted to collect the child, we apply the procedures for uncollected children.
- We contact NYCC children's social services care team:
Duty social worker 01609 780780
- The child stays at setting in the care of two staff members until they are safely collected either by the parents or by a social care worker.
- Social Care will aim to find the parent or relative. If they can't, the child may become looked after by the local authority.
- Under no circumstances do staff go to look for the parent, nor do they take the child home with them.
- A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.
- Depending on circumstances, we reserve the right to charge parents for the additional hours worked by our staff.

Ofsted may be informed: tel no. 0300 123 1231

Policy statement

Children's safety is always maintained as our highest priority, both on and off our premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the Outings Procedure (1.7) and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures – Child going missing on the premises (indoors or out) - As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/member of staff alerts the setting leader.

- The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Available staff will go to look around the school perimeter and school staff will be asked to support the search.

If a child going missing on an outing - This procedure describes what we do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the setting Leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and may be responsible for their own child. If a parent is present and responsible for the child, staff will support with searches.
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the setting leader. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned there.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, staff contact the venue's security to organise the search and contact the police until the child is found.

The setting leader contacts the police and may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff stay calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting leader speaks with the parent(s).
- The owners, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
- The date and time of the report.
- What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
- What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
- The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to keep everyone calm.

The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.

- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be one of the setting's owners. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called if necessary.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

1.7 Safeguarding children - Supervision of children on outings and visits

Policy statement; Children benefit from being taken out of the setting to go on visits or trips to local parks or other suitable venues for activities which enhance their learning experiences. Acorns staff ensure that there are procedures to keep children safe on outings; all staff and volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures below.

Procedures

- Parents sign a general consent on registration for their children to be taken out as a part of the daily activities of the setting.
- Parents are always asked to sign specific consent forms before major outings.
- A risk assessment is carried out before an outing takes place. If this is somewhere we have visited previously, we will use risk assessments from previous visits, provided that we are certain that no changes have been made.
- All venue risk assessments are made available for parents to see.
- Our adult to child ratio is high, normally one adult to two children, depending on their age, sensibility and type of venue as well as how it is to be reached. The ratio is one adult to three children when using Walkodiles.
- Named children are assigned to individual staff to ensure each child is individually supervised, to ensure no child goes astray, and that there is no unauthorised access to children.
- Outings are recorded in an 'outings record book' kept in the setting stating: The date and time of outing, the venue and mode of transport, names of staff assigned to named children.
- Staff take a mobile phone on outings, and supplies of tissues, wipes, pants etc as well as a mini first aid pack, snacks and water. The amount of equipment will vary and be consistent with the venue, the number of children and length of visit.
- Staff take a list of children with them with emergency contact numbers of parents/carers.
- A minimum of two staff should accompany children on outings and a minimum of two should remain behind with the rest of the children, if only a group of children are taken out.

1.8 Safeguarding children - Maintaining children's safety and security on premises

Policy statement; We maintain the highest possible security of our premises to ensure that each child is safely cared for whilst at Acorns.

Procedures

Children's personal safety

- We ensure all employed staff, students and volunteers have had a DBS check made on them. At least one member of staff holds an up to date Safer Recruitment certificate.
- Adults do not supervise children on their own.
- All children are supervised by adults at all times (at very minimum, either within hearing or sight).
- Whenever children are on the premises at least two adults are present.
- We carry out risk assessment to ensure children are not made vulnerable within any part of our premises or activities.
- Any medicines or other dangerous substances e.g. cleaning fluids, are stored out of reach of the children. See Health & Safety Policy (4.1)

Security

- Systems are in place for the safe arrival and departure of children. One adult is allocated to supervise safety at the door.
- The times of the children's arrivals and departures are recorded, other than normal open and closing times.
- The arrival and departure times of adults - staff, volunteers and visitors - are recorded.
- The gate to the setting is padlocked when children are present. Anyone wanting access will have to ask a member of staff.
- Our systems prevent unauthorised access to our premises. Although it is a shared building, there is no right of way for anyone from outside into the school building unless accompanied by a staff member.
- Doors are locked internally and can only be opened by adults from inside whenever the large gate is not locked. Gates are checked regularly to ensure they remain locked.
- Our systems prevent children from leaving our premises unnoticed.
- The personal possessions of staff and volunteers are securely stored during sessions.
- Children are encouraged to be aware of their own safety and tell an adult if they are worried. They take part in daily checks and become aware of the need for the gates to be closed etc.
- The internal door to the school has double handles to prevent children from being able to open it.
- A sign is attached to the gate informing people that they cannot enter when children are playing outside.

Adults are aware of the school's lock-down procedure and how we should behave if we are made aware of the threat of an intruder or similar incident (see separate guidance).

1.9 Safeguarding children - Making a complaint

Policy statement

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

Procedures

We keep a 'summary log' of all complaints that reach stage two or beyond. This is to be made available to parents as well as to Ofsted inspectors. All complaints, no matter how minor, are thoroughly investigated internally and used as an opportunity for us to improve practice. They are then reviewed to ensure that any changes required have been made and to ensure that we feel that complaints have been handled fairly and objectively. The investigation is led by Sandra Matthews, or in the case of the complaint being made against her, the investigation would be led by Catherine Kaiser. Records of complaints are kept for three years and then destroyed.

Making a complaint;

Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision, talks over their concerns with their key person or setting leader, if they feel that they are able to do so. Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage. We would assure parents that we wish to know if there is a problem, so that it can be resolved transparently.

Stage 2

- If stage 1 does not have a satisfactory outcome, if the parent feels unable to discuss the concerns, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the setting leader.
- The setting stores written complaints from parents in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, all information relating to the investigation will be stored confidentially in a separate complaint file.
- When the investigation is complete, the setting leader meets with the parent to discuss the outcome. She will also write to parents to summarise the complaint, any outcomes and actions taken as a result.
- All complaints will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt, and investigations will begin as soon as possible. Parents must be informed of the outcome of the investigation **within 28 days** of making the complaint.
- When the complaint is resolved, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record, which is kept in a confidential file. The summary record is made available to Ofsted upon request.

Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, a meeting is requested with the setting leaders. The parent should have a friend/partner present if required.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record and stored in the Complaints file, as described in Stage 2. The complainant will have 14 days to appeal, after which time the matter will be considered closed.

Stage 4

- If at the stage three meeting the parent and setting cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review action so far, and suggest further ways it might be resolved.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. They can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (setting leader and owners) and the parent, if it is decided that this would be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice given.

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded their investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the setting leader and an owner is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. The complainant is given a further 14 days to appeal. If no appeal is received, then the matter is considered to be closed. Again, the recording procedures are as described in stage 2.

The role of the Ofsted and/or North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership;

Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure.

In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the setting's registration requirements, for example with regard to safeguarding, health and safety, or legal requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.

The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is:

0300 123 1231; Or in writing;

Ofsted, North Region Centre, 3rd Floor, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Anne's Sq, Manchester, M2 7LA

These details are displayed on our setting's website.

Safeguarding -

- If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of the NY Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- In these cases, both the parent and setting are informed and the setting leader works with Ofsted or NYSCP and Local Area Designated Safeguarding Officer (LADO) to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.
- In the case of a complaint about a member of staff with regard to Safeguarding, the procedures set out in our safeguarding policy (section 1.1) will be followed.



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Records

- A record of complaints against our setting and/or the children and/or the adults working in our setting is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Summary Complaints Record which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors on request. This is reviewed annually by the setting's management to ensure that any changes have been implemented and that all complaints have been handled correctly.
- Although complaints are kept confidential, any safeguarding concern over-rides confidentiality, and may have to be passed on the relevant authorities.

Copies of our Complaints Policy are available in the cloakroom and on our website. If a parent does not wish to make a complaint in person, they can write to, or nominate a third party to write to,
Mrs S Matthews (Manager), Acorns Playgroup, C/o Bilton Grange School, Bilton Lane, Harrogate HG1 3BA.

1.10 Online safety Policy - Including Cameras, Mobile phones, videos, tablets, internet, and Social Network policy

Policy statement; Staff must at all times ensure that they use technology in a way that does not expose children to harm, does not bring the setting into disrepute, and that they do not behave in a manner that would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children, or to act as an appropriate role model.

Staff should always adopt high standards of personal conduct, and action will be taken against individuals who use inappropriate language, post inappropriate content, or make inappropriate comments in their private life. This could compromise their position in the work setting and lead to a loss of trust and confidence. Staff are advised to consider and set appropriately their privacy settings and should consider the appropriateness of images and material posted. Once posted online, a message, photo, or video clip can be freely copied, manipulated and circulated, and will potentially exist forever. ALL staff and volunteers sign an Online safety agreement, which is kept in their personal file.

Mobile phones and internet; At Acorns, the co-owners often need to use the setting phone as part of their work eg. To contact parents, ordering products etc. However, we recognise the risks to both adults and children from mobile phone use and have agreed rules for their use in the setting. This is that personal phones (or any device which can take images) will be stored in a communal box in the closed storage cupboard. In an emergency, staff can be contacted on Acorns' phone. One person (who is not on the nappy rota) will be responsible for the phone at all times. Business calls will only be made if ratios allow for them, and on the setting's phone.

All staff, volunteers and students are required to sign our Online safety Policy.

Cameras; Digital cameras are used in the setting as part of the assessment and planning process. However, only one camera is in use at any one time, and this is downloaded daily by the DSL or DSLR, in order to create learning stories, brochures, our daily Tapestry record, training materials, and our website. Photographs are also occasionally, used in academic/course work. In order to ensure that photographs are only taken of normal play activities, photographs are downloaded on to the Acorns computer regularly. These are accessed by password given only to employees. Tapestry records are made on one tablet. They are published to parents daily by the DSL/DSLR.

Parents are not allowed to take photographs on Acorns premises and are not permitted to use their phones.

Storage of images of children; Photographs are downloaded on to the Acorns laptop at the end of each day. These are then used to create learning stories or for displays within the setting and leaflets, for example as explained above. They are stored on a password protected laptop so that staff can use them to create learning stories. These are checked by the manager. Once images have been used, the photographs taken will be deleted. Storage complies with GDPR 2018 policy.

The Tapestry app is used in accordance with parents' agreement. A camera is used to create half termly progress reports. Photographs are overseen by manager and kept at Acorns on the laptop.

Procedures

The use of phones by employees, students and volunteers, is to be kept to emergencies only.

- Under no circumstances should mobile phones be used to take photographs of children, even with parents' consent.
- Phones and cameras should not be taken into the toilet area.
- Parents are asked to sign a consent form for photographs to be taken. It is explained that their child may appear in other children's photographs and are sometimes used for training and our publicity materials, and parents are asked for permission for this.
- Any photographs taken for publicity materials, such as brochures, training or our website will not identify children individually and full-face pictures and close-ups are not used.

Internet and Social Networking;

The internet is used at Acorns on reputable websites to support children's learning. The management also use it for emailing, keeping up to date with policies, business purposes and for ordering equipment.

Staff should never seek to communicate with children/make contact or respond to contact with children, outside a clear work context. They should never give any personal details to children, and if they have personal contact with parents/carers of children, they should make their manager aware. Any communication via computer and other devices should take place within professional boundaries and should avoid communication which could be interpreted as 'grooming'.

Procedures; Internet; The internet at Acorns is subject to NYCC safety vetting, this means that only sites deemed suitable by them are available. Whilst management use the internet for the reasons stated above, employees, students and volunteers should only use the internet to support children's learning under supervision. Web pages are checked to ensure safe content before they are shared with children.



Sandra Matthews is responsible for the Acorns' website content. We endeavour to ensure that children cannot be identified in any photographs and we never use children's names or any other identifying feature.

Social networking;

- All members of staff are asked to sign our **online safety guidelines** and a copy of this is kept in their personal file.
- Staff, students and volunteers **should NOT** be 'friends' with current parents in social network sites.
- Acorns should **never be referred to on social networking sites in any capacity whatsoever**, even indirectly.
- Staff should be extremely sensitive when writing 'statuses' as to how parents might view Acorns in the light of any comments made, for example saying that they are unwell, as this could easily be seen by parents.
- Any breeches of confidentiality or discussing Acorns on social networking websites will be taken very seriously and may lead to dismissal. And our procedures may be followed under section 1.2 'Allegations against members of staff'.

Statement for Children's safe use of ICT - All staff should be aware that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. Children are at risk of abuse and other risks online as well as face to face. In many cases abuse and other risks will take place concurrently both online and offline.

We believe that ICT is an important aspect of learning. Children can use the internet, under adult supervision, to extend their knowledge of the world and support their curiosity. We ensure that all children have access to a variety of appropriate resources using current technology. We recognise that children need to be competent and confident in the use of ICT from an early age. However in order to ensure that children get the best learning opportunities from ICT, we have agreed a set of guidelines for its use. Staff are asked to sign our online safety policy which controls the safe use of the internet, social networking, and use of technological equipment.

Acorns' ethos - In our experience, many parents believe that children should not be using a computer whilst they are at preschool, as they have sufficient screen time in their access to ICT at home. We agree, believing that learning social skills should take priority over using a computer. Research has established that children using ICT tend to play alone. At Acorns, we ensure that children have technological experiences, but this is balanced carefully against social experiences. We check with parents to ensure that children are learning computer skills at home, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in this area. If parents felt that their child was disadvantaged in their access to ICT, we would support their individual needs by providing access to some screen time through supervised use of our laptop or tablet.

Use of the computers and the internet;

The owners oversee the safe use of technology and take action immediately if there are any concerns. The internet can be a very useful way of extending children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them and they also need to know how to use a computer and SAFE access to the internet is our priority. However there are some important points to be aware of;

- Children will never have unsupervised access to the internet. It is important that adults supervise children to ensure that they only access sites which are safe and suitable for their age group. Our internet is filtered by North Yorkshire for safe content, but adults ensure that they know which sites children are using and what they are doing.
- We will discuss at an appropriate level with children, what safe internet use looks like. We will also share our knowledge with parents via discussions at home visits and in our newsletters.
- Children need to learn from adults how games are played and how to find what they are looking for, so adults stay with children to show them how to navigate the internet.
- Staff are aware of the dangers of Artificial Intelligence and alert to safeguarding issues around this.
- Children have a wide range of experience of using ICT at home, from those who can use it independently, to those who have no experience at all, so it is essential that adults are responsible for differentiating support effectively.
- Children will not watch videos or television on the internet. Research shows that there is no educational or developmental benefit to merely watching video with little or no interaction. It is however, acceptable if children want to watch a video to learn more about a subject which interests them, but an adult will support them in this and ensure that they understand what they are seeing and are gaining additional learning from it, by asking appropriate questions and encouraging discussion.
- Adults also need to ensure that children take turns and do not spend long periods of time using the computer. Children learn more effectively through moving around at this age, and should be active for most of the day, so it is not desirable for them to sit still for long periods, either using the computer or watching others use it. Sedentary use of ICT is avoided.
- Some parents ask that their child does not use a computer at Acorns. We respect their wishes in this.
- Only reputable websites such as Cbeebies and Hungry Little Minds, Teach your Monster and Cosmic Kids will be used. These websites will also be promoted to parents as reputable sites for home education.
- To provide exercise, the internet may be used for dancing videos which are checked in advance.
- Only educational games will be played.
- Children will not use the PC as though it is a television for watching, rather than interacting, except to extend knowledge. An adult will supervise any use of the internet for reference.
- Children will not be allowed to spend more than a maximum of 20 minutes using, or watching someone use, the PC.
- Children will not be allowed to watch others using the computer, other than when waiting for their turn.

Legal framework <https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/parents-carers/parent-info/games-consoles-smart-devices-and-how-to-keep-your-children-safe/>

Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Considerations for Managers 2019.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

1.11 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy – Safer Recruitment Policy

Introduction; All organisations which employ staff or students and volunteers to work with children, must adopt a consistent and thorough process of safer recruitment in order to ensure that people who work with children are always suitable to do so. This policy has been created using guidance from the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, Government guidance, and with regard to Level 3 Safer Recruitment Training undertaken by Acorns' DSL, Catherine Kaiser (April 2026) and DDSL Sandra Matthews (July 2026)

Safer recruitment practice includes people who may not have direct contact with children, but because of their presence and familiarity in a setting, might still be seen as safe and trustworthy.

When selecting adults to work with children, we ensure that the DSL takes a lead in the selection process and interview panel.

Procedures

Safer Recruitment Practice; Safer recruitment practice is at the forefront of our recruitment process including;

- Advertising and information for applicants.
- References
- Other checks before interview eg. Identifying gaps in employment history
- Selection of candidates
- Interviewing of short-listed candidates
- Offer of appointment to the successful candidate
- Induction and supervision of newly appointed staff

Advertisements and information for Applicants

Any advert for staff will demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding and protecting children by ensuring that all recruitment advertising materials contain a policy statement to this effect. All information we give to the interested applicant will highlight the importance placed on a rigorous selection process.

The information will stress that the identity of the candidate, if successful, will need to be checked thoroughly, and that a DBS check application will be required straight away.

The **job description** will set out the extent of the relationship with, and the degree of responsibility for, children with whom they will have contact. The person specification will explain;

- The qualifications and experience needed for the role.
- The competencies and qualities that the applicant should be able to demonstrate.
- How these will be tested and assessed during the selection process.

The application will ask for;

- Full personal information, including any former names by which the person has been known in the past.
- A full history of employment, both paid and voluntary, since leaving school, including periods of further education or training. This must include – start and ends dates, explanations for leaving, and any reasons for gaps in employment.
- Details of any relevant academic and/or vocational qualifications.
- A declaration that the person has **no convictions, cautions, or bind-overs, including those regarded as spent**. This will also include referral to or inclusion on the DBS Barred List, restricting or preventing them from working with children (Appendix G)

CV's drawn up by applicants in place of an application form are not acceptable because these will only contain the information the applicant wishes to present and may omit relevant details.

References;

The application form will ask both professional and character references, one of which must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer. Additional references may be asked for where appropriate. For example, where the applicant is not currently working with children, but has done so in the past, a reference from that employer will be asked for in addition to the current or most recent employer.

References must be sent wherever possible to business, not a home address. Wherever possible, references should be obtained prior to interview so that any issues of concern raised by the reference can be explored further with the referee and taken up with the candidate during interview. **Update Sept 25 refer to criteria 3.13 to 3.21 EYFS Sept 26. This will guide any recruitment process undertaken.**

References must contain objective, verifiable information, and in order to achieve this, a reference pro-forma with questions relating to the candidate's suitability to work with children should be provided.

References must include;

- Length of time the person has known the applicant and in what capacity.
- Post held with dates and reason for leaving.
- Ability and suitability to work with children.
- Skills, strengths and weaknesses and how these have been demonstrated
- Any current disciplinary investigation and/or sanctions.
- Any allegations and/or disciplinary investigations relating to the safety or welfare of children, and the outcome of these (including where any sanction has expired).
- Details of any criminal convictions, cautions or bind-overs
- If the referee would re-employ the applicant and, if not details of why
- Verification of the identity of the referee.

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The referee must be asked to confirm whether the applicant has been the subject of any disciplinary sanctions and whether the applicant has had any allegations made against them, or concerns raised which relate to either the safety or welfare of children, or about the applicant's behaviour towards children. Details about the outcomes of any concerns or allegations should be sought.

Open references or testimonials will not be accepted.

Other Checks before Interview;

If the applicant claims to have specific qualifications or experiences relevant to working with children, which may not be verified by a reference, the facts should be verified by making contact with the relevant body or previous employer and any discrepancy explored during the interview.

Selection of Candidates;

Standard procedures will be followed to ensure that the best candidates are selected fairly. All applicants must be assessed equally against the criteria contained in the person specification without exception or variation.

Safer recruitment means that all applications must additionally be;

- Checked to ensure that they are fully and properly completed. Incomplete applications should not be accepted and will be returned to the candidate for completion.
- Scrutinised for any anomalies or discrepancies in the information provided.
- Considered with regard to any history gaps, or repeated changes in employment, or moves to supply work, without clear and verifiable reasons.

All candidates will be instructed to bring with them documentary evidence of their identity, with a full birth certificate, passport or photo card driving licence, and additionally a document such as a utility bill or bank statement that verifies the candidate's name and address. Where appropriate, change of name documentation must also be brought to the interview.

Candidates must also be asked to bring original or certified copies of documents confirming any necessary or relevant educational and professional qualifications. If the successful candidate cannot produce original documents or certified copies, written confirmation of their qualifications must be obtained from the awarding body.

Interviewing short listed Candidates;

Questions will be set which test the candidate's specific skills and abilities to carry out the job applied for.

The candidate's attitude towards children in general must be tested and also their commitment to safeguarding and promoting children's welfare. Any gaps and changes in employment history must be fully explored during the interview, as should any discrepancies arising from the information supplied by the candidate or by the referee.

All candidates must bring to the interview documentary evidence as detailed in the Asylum and Immigration Act and in line with the DBS requirements. See www.ukimmigration.com/employer/uk_work_permit14.htm and www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-servicecheck/documents-the-applicant-must-provide where relevant, change of name documentation must be brought to the interview.

Offer of Appointment

Any offer of employment will be conditional upon all pre-employment checks being completed satisfactorily. This includes DBS check, verification of the candidate's medical fitness, verification of relevant professional status and any restrictions which may have been imposed. No candidate will be allowed to start work until a suitable DBS has been received.

All checks will be confirmed in writing, recorded and retained on the candidate's personnel file, together with photocopies of documents used to identify identity and qualifications.

DBS Checks; There are three levels of checks, Standard, Enhanced and Enhanced with Barred checks. DBS checks are available to organisations which work in employments listed in the Exceptions Order (1975) to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, as amended by the Protection of Freedom Act 2012.

Standard DBS check – this will reveal any convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings received.

Enhanced Disclosure – this includes the same as the standard check, plus any additional information held by police that's reasonably considered relevant to the workforce being applied for.

Enhanced Disclosure with Barred list Check – This includes all of the information above, but also identifies whether the person is barred from working with children.

Under DBS regulations, DBS disclosures can usually only be kept for 6 months, but a record should be kept of the date the disclosure was obtained and who by, the level of disclosure and the unique reference number.

DBS Update service; This is a subscription service which allows the applicant to keep their DBS check up to date online. This allows employees to check a certificate online without having to make another application.

Record Keeping;

A record is kept of evidence to show that checks have been carried out in respect of staff, supply staff, volunteers and students.

Satisfactory references are kept on the candidate's personnel file, in the case of supply staff, students and volunteers, in a central record within the organisation (Even if they have been recruited through an agency).

Where information gained from either references or other checks, calls into question the candidate's suitability to work with children, or where the candidate has provided false information in support of the application, the facts should be reported to the Police and DBS.

Induction of staff, students and volunteers;

- The induction of all newly appointed staff includes a planned and structured induction. This begins with an introduction to our child protection policy and procedures. This includes introducing the DSL and their role, and the role of staff in safeguarding.
- New staff are provided with information about safe practice and given a full explanation of their own role and responsibilities and the standard of conduct and behaviour expected.
- They are also made aware of our personnel procedures relating to disciplinary issues and our whistle-blowing policy.
- They are asked to complete basic Safeguarding training.

Acorns has a minimum four-week review period, during which a new member of staff will not be allowed to carry out regulated activity unsupervised. Once all checks and a DBS check is fully completed, and the induction period satisfactorily carried out, the member of staff will be asked to have a discussion with the manager and DSL in order to discuss how regulated activity can be carried out and the arrangements to ensure that children are fully protected.

Safeguarding controls and supervision will be undertaken by the manager and DSL on a regular basis, and the member of staff will have at least a six-monthly appraisal meeting so that any concerns can be discussed.

Legal framework

Primary legislation; Children Act (1989 s47), Protection of Children Act (1999), Data Protection Act (1998)

The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004), Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

Secondary legislation; Sexual Offences Act (2003) Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)

Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government 2026. Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)

What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG 2015)

Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004

1.12 Safeguarding and child Protection Policy - Prevent Duty and Promoting Fundamental British Values.

All registered early years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" This duty is known as the *Prevent Duty*.

Procedures; At Acorns, safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do, therefore to ensure that we adhere to and achieve the requirements of Prevent Duty, we will;

- Provide appropriate training for staff and ensure that they fully understand their duties. Part of this training will enable staff to identify children (or families) who may be at risk of radicalisation.
- Build children's resilience by promoting *fundamental British values*, enabling them to develop the courage and confidence to challenge extremist views. The EYFS sets standards for learning, development and care, which are embedded within children's PSSED, Communication development and Understanding the World.
- We will assess the risk, by means of formal risk assessment, of children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of the terrorist ideology. This will begin as we aim to develop respectful and open relationships with parents, using information gathered from registration forms, and our knowledge of families gained from home visits.
- We will ensure staff understand the possible risks so they can respond in an appropriate and proportionate way.
- We will be aware of the online risk of radicalisation through the use of social media and the internet.
- As with managing our safeguarding risks, our staff will be alert to changes in children's behaviour, unusual or unexpected drawings or comments, concerning or violent behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection (children at risk of radicalisation may display different signs or may seek to hide their views). The key person approach means we already know our children well and so we will notice any changes in behaviour, demeanour or personality quickly.
- We will not carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life, but we will take action when we observe behaviour of concern. The key person approach means we already have a rapport with our families, so we are well-placed to notice any changes in behaviour, demeanour or personality quickly.
- We will work in partnership with our local NYSCP for guidance and support.
- We will assist and advise families who raise concerns with us, in order to be able to signpost appropriate support mechanisms.
- We will ensure that our Designated Safeguarding Lead will undertake Prevent Duty awareness training (as a minimum) so that they can offer advice and support to other members of staff.
- Staff will have an on-going and open discussion about their own beliefs around British values, and what they mean to staff, children and families using the setting, ensuring that there is a balance created between celebrating and respecting difference, whilst being aware of the dangers of radicalisation.

"Fundamental British Values"

For further information with regards to how the EYFS can help children and staff understand British Values and The Prevent Duty, please refer to sections Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSSED) and Understanding the World (UTW)

To help understand how this is put into practice on a daily basis at Acorns, a few examples are listed below:

Democracy: Making decisions together: PSSED;

Managers and staff can encourage children to see their role in the bigger picture, encouraging children to know their views count, value each other's views and opinions, and talk about feelings. For example, saying when they do or do not need help.

When appropriate, demonstrate democracy in action, for example, children sharing views on what book to choose at circle time by a show of hands.

Staff can support the decisions that children make, and provide activities that involve turn taking, sharing and collaboration. Children should be given opportunities to develop enquiring minds in an atmosphere where views are listened to and valued.

Rule of Law: Understanding rules matter: PSSED

- Staff can ensure that children understand their own and other's behaviours and its consequences, and to distinguish right from wrong.
- Staff can collaborate with children to create the rules and codes of expected behaviour, for example, to agree the rules about tidying up and ensure all children understand rules apply to everyone. Our 'Thinking Club' reinforces this.

Individual Liberty: Freedom for all: PSSED & UTW

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- Children should develop a positive sense of themselves. Staff can provide opportunities for children to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and increase their confidence in their own abilities. For example, allowing children to take risks on an obstacle course, mixing colours, or talking about their experiences and learning.
- Staff should encourage a range of experiences that allow children to explore the language of feelings and responsibility, reflect on their differences and understand we are free to have different opinions, for example, in a small group discuss how they feel about the transition from nursery to school.

Mutual Respect and Tolerance: treat others as you want to be treated: PSED & UTW

- Managers and leaders create an ethos of inclusivity and tolerance where views, faiths, cultures and race are valued and children are engaged with the wider community.
- Children should acquire a tolerance and appreciation of and respect their own and other cultures: know about similarities and differences between themselves and others among families, faiths, communities, cultures and traditions and share practices, celebrations and experiences.
- Staff should encourage and explain the importance of tolerant behaviours such as sharing and respecting other people's opinions.
- Staff should promote diverse attitudes and challenge stereotypes, for example, sharing stories that reflect and value diversity of children's experiences and providing resources and activities that challenge gender, cultural and racial stereotyping.
- We aim to learn as much as we can about our children and families and their individual cultures when they start with us and encourage them to share their celebrations and experiences.

What is not acceptable:

- Actively promoting intolerance of other faiths, cultures and races
- Failure to challenge gender stereotypes and routinely segregating boys and girls.
- Isolating children from the wider community.
- Failure to challenge behaviours (whether this is staff, children or parents) that are not in line with the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.
- That any child should be treated less favourably than other child, for any reason. All children and families will be treated with unconditional positive regard.

<https://www.support-people-susceptible-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/awareness-course>

1.13 Attendance Monitoring Policy

Rationale; It is important that our records of children's attendance are accurately kept and regularly monitored to ensure that we can identify any potential problems and look for patterns. All managers and staff are alert to signs that children and learners who are missing might be at risk of abuse or neglect, and appropriate action is taken when children and learners stop attending or have poor attendance.

We are aware that attendance is not statutory, but that non-attendance could be an indicator of other concerns. We are particularly aware of the need to monitor groups such as children with Special Educational Needs, children who are in receipt of two year old funding, those for whom we receive Early Years Pupil Premium, and children who are known to or who may have a social worker, as these groups are considered to be vulnerable learners. We will have particular awareness of children who already have safeguarding plans in place of any kind e.g. Child in Need, child protection plan, low-level concerns record etc.

Procedures;

- Children's attendance is monitored through daily registers. All absences and reasons given for them are recorded on the register each day.
- Parents are asked to inform us in person, by phone, by text or Facebook message, if their child will not be attending for any reason, as soon as possible. If we are not contacted by 9.30am, we will contact parents. **This is explained at our home visits.**
- All absences will be recorded, and frequent absences (50% attendance or less) will be investigated and further action or monitoring considered. We will always discuss our concerns with parents and endeavour to enable children to attend as regularly as possible. This may mean agreeing to a later start on a daily basis (some children have to drop-off children at other schools for example).
- Absence is also monitored for the health and well-being of children, for example so that we are aware of outbreaks of illness which need to be investigated, or to warn parents of infections such as chickenpox or German Measles.
- Monitoring attendance and use of government funded hours may be passed on at the local authority's request.
- If a child is missing from nursery on several occasions or stops attending the setting with no explanation, staff are alert to the possibility of risk of abuse or neglect, and informs the DSL who will investigate and liaise with outside agencies.
- We regularly communicate the importance of punctuality and attendance to parents, through newsletters, at home visits and daily conversations.
- **We will keep an additional emergency contact number (minimum two) and this person will be contacted in the case of unexplained absences.**

Funded places;

- Two-, three- and four-year-old funding is provided through the local authority. This is public money, and we have a duty to ensure it is used appropriately. If a place has been reserved but is being used for less than 50% of booked session, we reserve the right to offer that place to any child who may be on our waiting list, for example, a child who has been allocated two-year-old funding, but cannot take up a place at Acorns because sessions are full. This way we can be sure to use the funding to its best effect.
- We would discuss reasons for absence with parents before retracting the funding offer and make every effort to work with them to encourage them to increase attendance. Funding would only be withdrawn as a last resort, and at the end of a school term.

1.14 Staff Conduct Policy

Statement;

All adults have a crucial role to play in the lives of children and responsibilities and behaviour needs to reflect this.

All staff have the responsibility of keeping children safe and to protect them from abuse and to take steps to ensure their safety and well being. The safeguarding culture at Acorns is child-centred and takes place through the development of respectful, caring and professional relationship between adults and children.

When individuals accept the role to work with children they should understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust involved in that role. Staff should always consider whether their actions are warranted, proportionate, safe, and applied equitably. All staff are in a position of trust in relation to all children. Staff have the position of power and influence, and all staff should understand this, and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence. Due to the potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable children, staff have the responsibility to ensure that the unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Procedures; Expected conduct

- Staff should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted by others and report and record any such incident or concerns, following our Whistle-blowing Policy.
- All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of children. High standards of personal conduct must be adopted in order to maintain the confidence and respect of parents and colleagues.
- Individual actions in personal life may come under scrutiny from the community and the wider public including with regard to their own children and families. Staff should be aware of their own behaviour both in and out of the workplace which could compromise their position within the workplace in relation to the protection of children, loss of trust and confidence or bringing Acorns into disrepute.
- A person's dress and appearance are matters of personal choice and self expression. However, staff should select a manner of dress and appearance appropriate to their professional role which may be different to that adopted at home. Staff should ensure that they are dressed decently, safely and appropriate for the job they undertake.
- Staff need to take care not to accept any gifts that may be construed as a bribe by others or lead to the giver to expect preferential treatment. There are occasions where children or parents wish to pass small tokens of appreciation to staff, eg Christmas, and this is usually acceptable, but to receive gifts on a regular basis is unacceptable. It is inadvisable to give such personal gifts to children or their families as it might be interpreted as a gesture to either bribe or groom.
- Staff should take care when selecting children for a specific activity or job in order to avoid perceptions of favouritism or injustice. Similar care should be taken when excluding children from an activity. Methods of selection should always be subject to clear, fair agreed criteria.
- All staff need to be aware that it is not uncommon for children to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. They should ensure that their behaviour cannot be questioned, does not encourage this behaviour and be aware that such infatuations may carry the risk of words and actions being misinterpreted. Any staff member who becomes aware of this, however small and seemingly insignificant, with either them or another member of staff must report it immediately to the manager so early intervention can be taken to prevent this escalating. The manager should handle the situation sensitively considering staff, the child and parents, ensuring a plan is put together to manage the situation, maintaining the dignity of all. The plan should involve all parties, be robust and regularly monitored and reviewed.
- It is acknowledged that sometimes members of staff may have genuine friendships and social contact with parents of pupils, independent of the professional relationship. Staff should be aware that professionals who harm children often seek to establish relationships and contact outside the workplace with both the child and their parents in order to groom the adult and the child and/or create opportunities for sexual abuse. Be aware that some types of social contact with children and/or families may be perceived as harmful or influential and may bring Acorns into disrepute. If you need to support a parent and they become dependent on you outside of your professional role this should be discussed with the manager and appropriate support and referrals should be sought.
- Staff should make sure online safety is paramount at all times working to national and local guidelines. Use of the computer and other technologies must take place within explicit professional boundaries. This includes the use of computers, tablets, phones, cameras, videos, webcams and other handheld devices and include Facebook, emails, messaging, texts, blogs, gaming websites to name a few (this is not exhaustive and are examples of some only). Staff should not request any personal details from children and parents other than what is required in their professional role. See also section 1.10.
- All communication must be transparent. Staff must not give personal details to parents or children including mobile number, email address, home address, web-based i.d. eg. Facebook details. If staff are contacted, they must report this to the manager, and the child/parent must be politely and firmly informed that this is not acceptable.
- Physical contact with a child must be carried out in ways appropriate to their professional role and in relation to individual needs and their care plan. Some children are uncomfortable with physical contact, and this must be respected. Permission may need to be sought first and sensitivity may be needed. Staff should listen, observe and take note of the child's reactions or feelings. Any physical contact should be in response to the child's needs at the time of limited duration and appropriate to their age, stage of development, gender, ethnicity and background. Physical contact should never be secretive, or for the gratification of the adult.
- If a member of staff believes their own, or a colleague's action could be misinterpreted or an action could possibly be abusive, the incident and circumstances should be immediately reported to the manager and recorded. Advice may need to be sought from the LADO.
- Staff need to be aware if a child has suffered previous abuse as they may react differently, they may need support to help them understand the importance of personal boundaries. Children with physical disabilities may require more physical contact. It is important that staff are aware of children who may interpret physical contact differently to others, e.g. Those with Sensory Processing Difficulties and children who may be on the Autistic Spectrum.



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- Holding and physical restraint – this is covered in our Health and Safety Policy (4.4) – and will be recorded as an incident and parents informed as soon as possible after the incident has occurred.
- For any concerns over staff conduct, please refer to section 1.1 Allegations against members of staff and our Whistle-blowing procedure.

All referrals are to be made to the Multi agency screening team (MAST)

Tel: 01609 780780 or 01609 535070

This number can also be used out of hours to contact the Emergency Duty Team

Alternatively, to by pass the initial part of the call, to go straight to the advisors

Tel: 01609 535070

All permanent staff sign to say that they have read and agree to this policy.

This policy has been reduced in size to ensure that information is available to anyone using our website. A full copy of the signed document is available by email or a copy can be viewed at Acorns.