

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 (2025), section 3.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa5e42ed27ca001327b2c7/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers.pdf

We take seriously our responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of all children and provide a culture of vigilance where safeguarding our children's welfare is actively promoted and the child is at the centre of everything we do. 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.**

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.

www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/procedures-practice-guidance-and-one-minute-guides/writing-a-child-protection-policy/.

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 monthly 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.



DEFINITIONS

Abuse; Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child 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.

Extremism; Extremism goes beyond terrorism and 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.

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.

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.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child 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.
- 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.
- She 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 Telephone 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.

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 (June 24) and have completed Safer Recruitment Training at Level 2. They attend North Yorkshire SCP Safeguarding Masterclasses 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.

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 three 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 details are recorded in the weekly staff meeting book.
- 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 deputy 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.
- 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 on them. 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)
- 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:

- listens to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action but that someone else will have to 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.
- clarify the information.
- try to 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.

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 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2015) guidance.
- A NYS CP 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 2024

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65cb4349a7ded000c79e4e1/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

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.
- **All staff, students and volunteers have DBS checks carried out on them.** Arrangements are in place to supervise non-DBS checked staff, and risk assessments completed to assess any risk for staff in regulated activity.
- **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/

Allegations against staff and Whistle-blowing:

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 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, or

Write: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

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.
- 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.

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 open and transparent.

Staff are expected to report any concerns and to make reference to our Complaints Procedure (1.9) and Whistle-blowing Policy (in 1.1).

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.
- Investigation by the Police.
- Investigation by the employer under staff disciplinary procedures (see our Disciplinary Policy and Procedures).
- Investigation by Ofsted.

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.

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.

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 780780 Emergency Duty Team; 01609 780780
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 2023). Section 3 – The safeguarding and welfare requirements Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 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) 2023 Education inspection framework (EIF) – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision 2023 Early years inspection handbook – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 Keeping children safe in education 2022 (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)

The North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) consists of three statutory safeguarding partners – North Yorkshire Council (NYC), Health and Police.

NYSCP Practice Guidance – Providers need to have a working knowledge of documents and to refer to relevant sections as needed. Refer to the "Professionals" tab on the NYSCP website NYSCP (safeguardingchildren.co.uk)

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)

Acorns Playgroup Child Protection Policy 2024

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.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf July 2018

<https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Writing-a-Safeguarding-Policy-v1.3-2019-11-11.pdf> accessed 5.8.21

The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2023 [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	Acorns Playgroup		
Held on	July 2024		Updated Sept 2025 in line with the revised EYFS.
Date to be reviewed	July 2026		
Signed on behalf of the owners			
Name of signatory and date	Catherine Kaiser (DSL) and Sandra Matthews (Deputy DSL)		
Directors'/staff initials and date	JW	LD	TH
Volunteers/staff signatures and date;			

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687105a381dd8f70f5de3ea9/EYFS_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers.pdf