

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL



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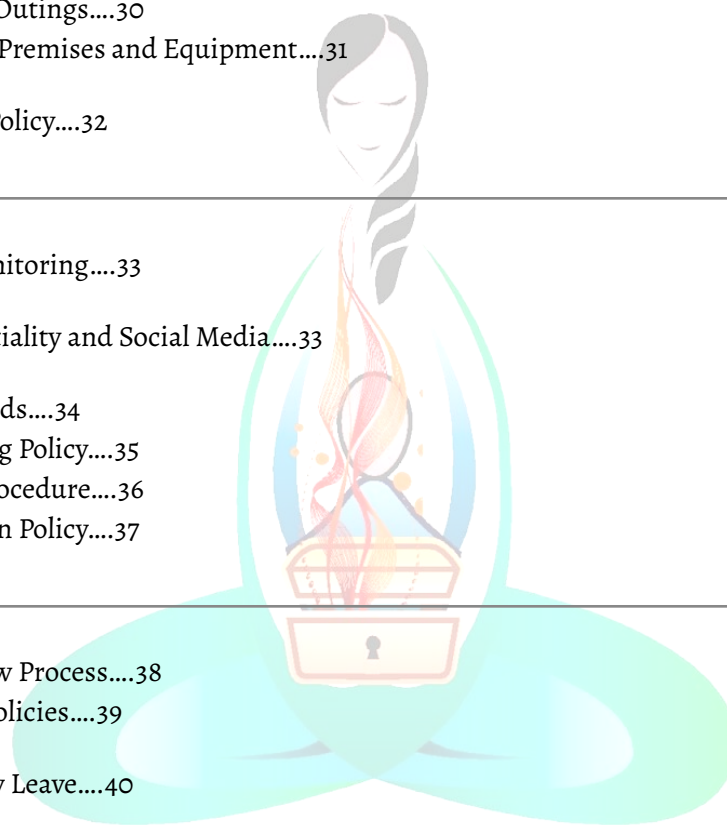
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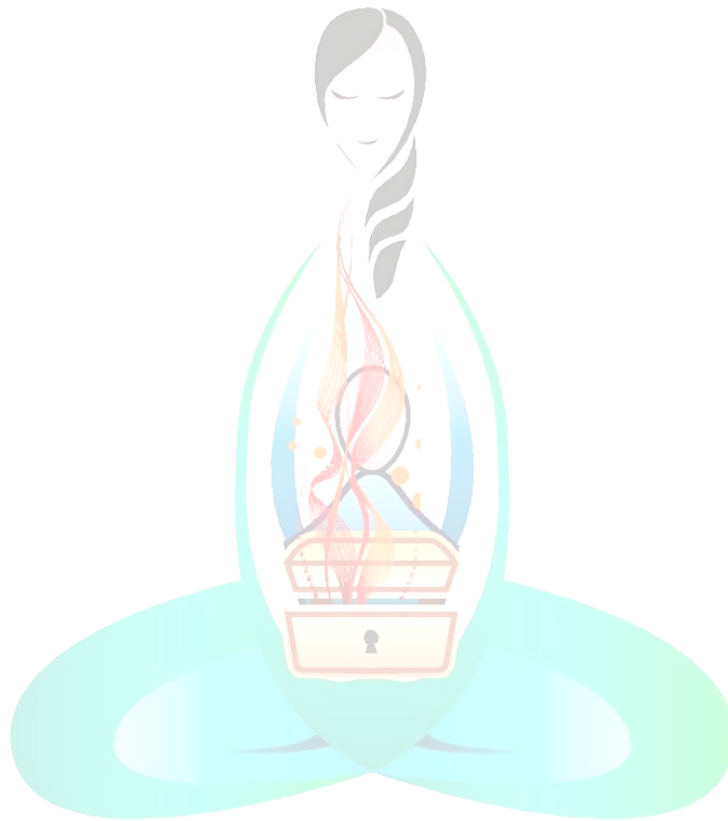
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1. Mission Statement

At Little Treasure, our aim is to provide an outstanding care service in a safe, homely environment that caters to the needs of the child and their family.

Here at Little Treasure Childcare Centres, we pride ourselves on offering a safe, caring, stimulating environment that promotes children's social, emotional, educational, and cognitive development. We encourage our children to learn about the world around them by allowing them to express themselves through play.

We strive to maintain a high quality service for our clients while focusing on helping the children in our care reach their full potential and maintain their well-being. For this to be achieved, we ensure that our Policies and Procedures Manual is in compliance with the latest standards issued by our local Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE).¹

Our settings provide an accessible environment with a wide range of play opportunities for children between the ages of 0-3 years and beyond. Our team members are also trained in meeting each child's physical and learning needs while showing tender care, aiding in establishing positive relationships with and between the children in their group.

We are constantly working on improving our service and providing peace of mind to parents while their children are in our care. Our team fosters a learning culture as we strive to share new knowledge, different points of views and opinions about the early years. Furthermore, any suggestions for improvement from both our internal and our external stakeholders are always welcome!

¹ National Standards for Early Childhood Education and care Services (0-3years) Available : <https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/MFED%20National%20Standards%20ECEC%20Oct21.pdf> [19/08/2022]

2. Our Approach

At Little Treasure we recognise that every child matters and strive to maintain their wellbeing while also building their resilience. We believe every child should be given the opportunity to thrive, mainly through nurture and interactions with their physical and social environment. We encourage play-based learning by encouraging our children to explore the environment around them as we provide resources to tap into each child's natural way of learning.

We understand that in order for every child to develop successfully, the fundamental role of parents/carers is extremely important, therefore, we strive towards creating a proactive partnership with parents at all times. Our enabling environments were specifically designed to provide a safe space for parents to entrust their children as they learn and grow.

Furthermore, our company believes that routines are an important daily practice which help the child feel secure within the environment as he/she will learn to predict what is coming next. Feeding times, nap times and other fixed activities in our daily routines depend on the age of the child and which group he/she forms part of. During the initial transition process of the child, the management will discuss with the parent/s the routine of the group and, if necessary, any changes which might need to be taken into consideration.

Activity plans are issued on a weekly basis and are planned according to the children's emergent skills, needs and interests. Furthermore, our activity plans take into account and include the Learning Outcomes Framework for the Early Years following the principles of the National Curriculum Framework (2012).²

²A National Curriculum Framework for All. (2012) Available :
<https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/The-NCF/Documents/NCF.pdf> [25/08/2022]

2.1. Our Team

The children in our care are looked after by suitable and qualified staff who have a positive regard for children and who have satisfied the eligibility and recruitment criteria. Each employee is requested to provide a clean, updated police conduct and is POMA³ approved on an annual basis. Our team is also professionally trained in paediatric first aid and food handling practices.

The facility maintains the appropriate carer to child ratios as stipulated in the local National Standards pictured below:



Child-to-Childcare Educator Ratios in Centre-Based and Work-Based Services

Age of children (months)	Number of children cared for by a qualified childcare educator
0 to 12	3
13 to 24	5
25 to 36 ²⁹	6
mixed group ³⁰	6
Age of children (months)	Number of children cared for by a qualified and accredited childcare educator AND an assistant to the childcare educator ³¹
0 to 12	5
13 to 24	8
25 to 36 ³²	10
mixed group ³³	10

³ Protection of Minors Act (2012) Available: <https://maltacvs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Protection-of-Minors-Act-2012.pdf> [31/08/22]

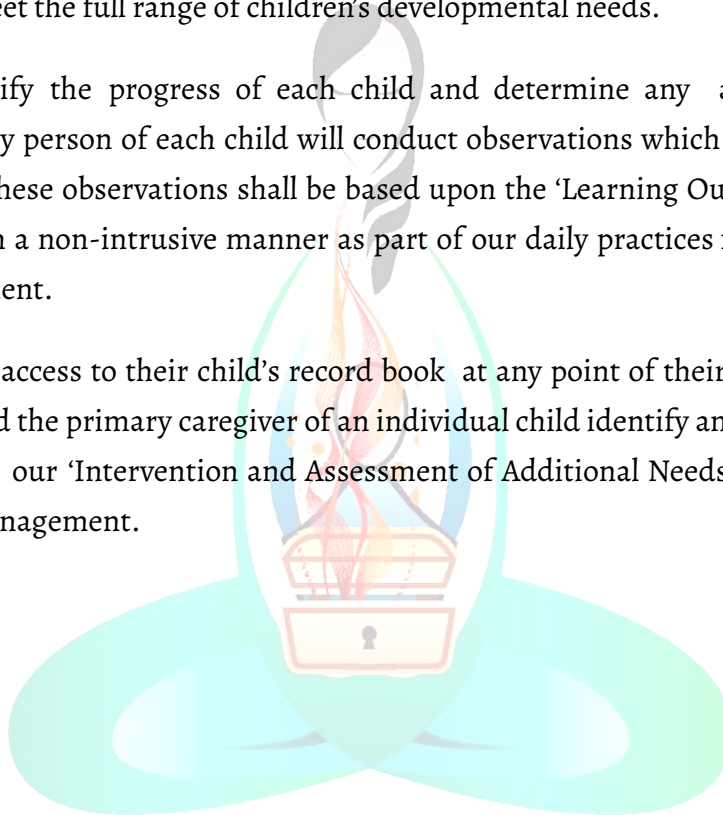
2.2. Pedagogy and Assessment Practices

Our teams are made up of qualified caregivers who talk, listen to and otherwise interact with children and cater for their physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs. Pedagogy in our sector mainly comprises nurturing practices while, as the child grows, they will require less physical care and will be able to independently learn and explore their environment using their senses and bodily movements.

Our professional teams are trained to be mindful of a child's unique characteristics and interests to scaffold onto a child's emergent skills. Activities and opportunities for play are organised so as to meet the full range of children's developmental needs.

To be able to identify the progress of each child and determine any additional support requirements, the key person of each child will conduct observations which will be reported in the child's records. These observations shall be based upon the 'Learning Outcome Framework' and are performed in a non-intrusive manner as part of our daily practices for us to determine an authentic assessment.

Parents may request access to their child's record book at any point of their child's attendance in our centres. Should the primary caregiver of an individual child identify any needs which may require intervention, our 'Intervention and Assessment of Additional Needs' procedure will be referred to by our management.



2.3. Identification and Assessment of Additional Needs

In the event of us observing that a child may have learning difficulties and/or a disability that has not previously been acknowledged/diagnosed, our management may request a private meeting with the child's parents/guardians. If a mutual agreement is reached, with the parents' authorisation, we will also endeavour a multidisciplinary team involvement in order to establish the child's needs and to provide avenues for future action that may be required. As a childcare setting, we ultimately have a duty of care for the child and we will do our utmost to find out all the relevant information that is applicable to the child's needs. Key workers that are involved with the child during their time at the centre will also be notified in confidence so that everyone who is involved with the child is aware of their needs.

We uphold the graduated approach to determining special needs/disabilities;

- Observing and planning for individual needs to support the child and reviewing progress regularly through developing action plans.
- The child's parents/carers are asked to attend a formal meeting to discuss our findings and ultimately, agree on the level of support and intervention needed.
- Seek any specialist help or support if and when required
- Talking with any other relevant professionals engaged with the child and their family to further develop an 'Individual Support Plan'.
- Reading and/or researching any information or reports provided by other professionals.
- Attending and/or instigating multi-agency meetings to discuss the child's development.
- Agreeing with parents, key carers and other professionals if intervention is no longer needed or if deciding to request an 'Educational and Health Care Needs Assessment'.

If the support given through the graduated approach is not sufficient to enable the child to make satisfactory progress, we may request, in consultation with parents/carers and any other external agencies already involved, an assessment of the child's needs by the Local Authority.

2.4. Positive Behaviour Management

At Little Treasure, our aim is to promote a safe space for children to thrive in a calm, supportive environment. We have a clear code of behaviour management that is understood and applied by the staff and conveyed to parents and children. As adults we are the role models to our children thus positive interactions and respectful behaviour with children and other adults alike is a must. All staff members are also aware of such behaviours to be mimicked as children interact with one another while taking note of signs of bullying, discrimination, exclusion or disrespect between adults or children at our setting.

Children are encouraged through positive guidance to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to show care and consideration for others. We promote the discussion of emotions which aids the children in our care to identify their feelings and seek help when they do not know how to handle them positively.

- We emphasise on the importance of positive communication.
- The staff members ensure that children are not bullied or threatened while in our care.
- The staff members work in a respectful and courteous partnership with parents and children to promote positive behaviour.
- When an unwanted, repeated behaviour coming from a child is noticed by a caregiver, we will discuss any underlying possible triggers with the parent/caregivers and work together to try and eliminate the habit.
- For such unwanted behaviours, our staff members shall use positive behaviour management by:
 - Role-modelling positive behaviours
 - Praising children's efforts and good behaviours
 - Respecting children as individuals
 - Supporting the child and understand any difficulties they may be facing
 - Developing strategies for dealing with the unwanted behaviour together with the child's parents.

At our centre, no violence against children is acceptable by members of staff or parents/guardians. This includes:

- Smacking and hitting or any other physical force
- Shouting
- Bullying or humiliating children
- Force-feeding or withholding food/drink
- Leaving a child to cry him/herself to sleep
- If such behaviour is witnessed, we are required to report the behaviour to local authorities in conformity with Maltese legislations.

3. Admission and Enrollment

Little Treasure Childcare Centres cater for children between the ages of 3 months and 3 years. Spaces are subject to availability while we operate on a first-come-first serve basis; those who bring all the necessary documents and submit the registration fee first, are given priority.

Our centres are open from Monday-Friday from 6.30am until 5:30pm. We are closed on weekends and national/public holidays. Upon enrollment and towards the end of each year, parents will receive a calendar stating the dates on which our centres will be closed throughout the following year. A copy of the calendar is also displayed in our reception area.

As a childcare provider we are supporting the government's Free Childcare scheme while we also cater for those wishing to pay a private fee. The rate for private payment will be in line with the government scheme which is €5.00/hr.

- Upon enrollment, parents are required to pay a one-time registration fee of €100.
- Parents who arrive to collect their children later than 5.30pm will be charged a late-collection fee of €30.
- A minimum of 30 hours/ week must be booked; the centre shall not accept less than 130 booked hours per month.

Application forms may be collected from our offices during operating hours or may be found on our website (www.littletreasure.eu). For further details and advice parents are invited to contact the centre management.

Cancellations - In the event of parents wishing to cancel their child's enrollment, they must inform our management as soon as possible and allow at least one (1) month notice.

Absences - In the event of illness parents are to inform the centre in advance of the start of the appropriate session and a medical certificate stating the child is fit to attend childcare must be presented upon the child's return.

3.1. Government Scheme

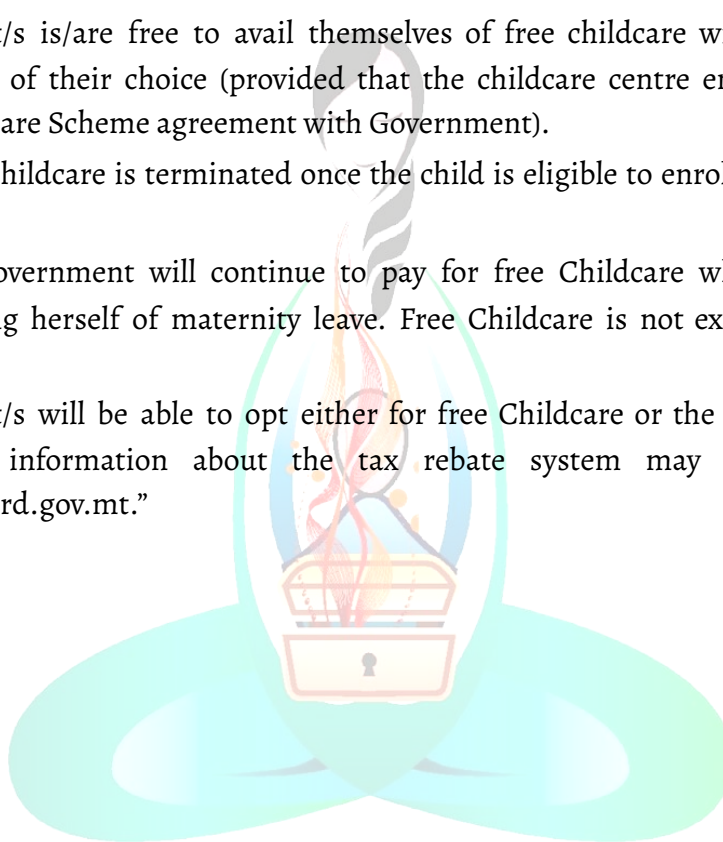
Parents are kindly requested to read through the terms and conditions for the government's Free Childcare Scheme as published by the Ministry for Education and Employment (2020)⁴.

These terms and conditions are an extension to our Policies and Procedures; centre policies noted in our manual are still to be adhered to by all of our stakeholders.

1. "Children whose parents are in work or in education can benefit from the free childcare scheme. 'Parents in work' is defined as both parents/guardians who are in work, or single mother/father/guardian who are in work and paying social security contributions. 'Parents in education' is defined as both parents/guardians who are in education leading to a recognised diploma or degree or single mother/father/guardian who are in education. Parent/s is/are entitled to Free Childcare for all children of childcare-age, at a rate which is pro-rata to the mother's (or single father) employment hours.
2. Parent/s is/are to inform the childcare service provider (ie. the childcare centre) of the number of hours and days of service one month in advance.
3. Parent/s is/are entitled to two (2) free fobs per child. These fobs will be assigned by the service provider and are to be used by the parent/s to fob in/fob out their child/children upon drop off and pick up from the childcare centre. Fobs are not to be left at the childcare centre when the child/children is/are not in attendance. If additional fobs are required by the parent/s, then these may be purchased from the childcare centre at a charge of €0.80c per fob.
4. Parent/s is/are urged not to over-book more hours of childcare than what is necessary. In case of overtime or unforeseen circumstances, an additional allowance of 10% over the booked hours will be paid by government if utilised.
5. Parent/s can consume more hours than they are entitled to with the Free Childcare Scheme, provided that they pay the provider's rate. Providers must inform parents of the chargeable rate prior to registration.
6. Parent/s has/have to present a medical certificate when a child is sick for more than 3 days, in order to be allowed to re-attend child care.
7. The uniform rate being paid covers staff costs and consumables including stationery. It will not cover costs that related to individual child needs, such as food, nappies and wipes. Cost of outings is not included.

⁴ Ministry for Education and Employment (2020) *TERMS & CONDITIONS for FREE CHILDCARE SCHEME CHILDCARE SERVICE USERS* Available: <https://education.gov.mt/freechildcare/Documents/FCS%20-%20Service%20Users%20TCs.pdf> [02/09/22]

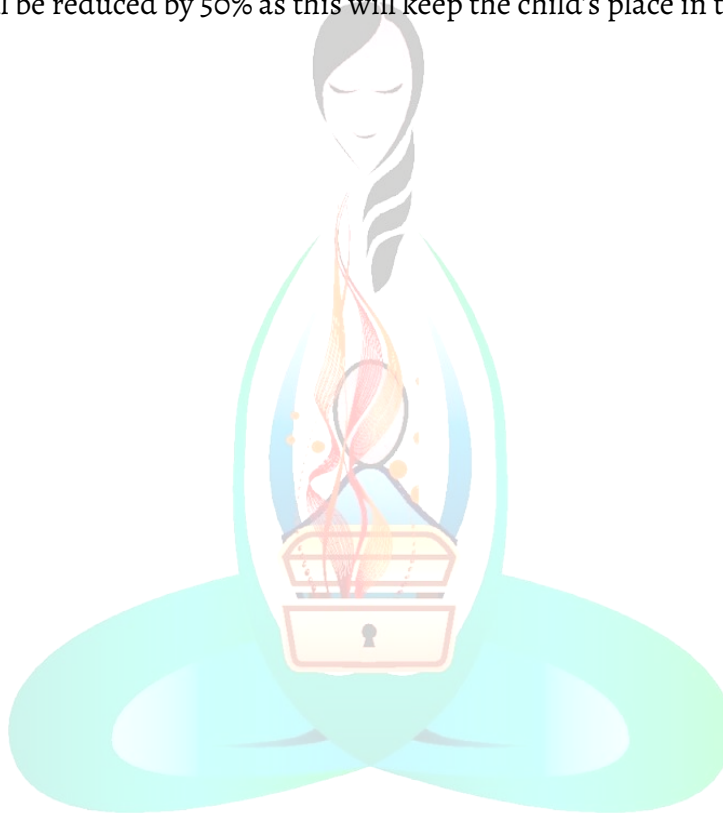
8. Government will pay childcare facilities the full rate if attendance for the month is equivalent to the booked hours. If attendance is less than the booked hours, the remaining balance will be deducted from the absence entitlement.
9. These absence days will apply pro-rata on a calendar basis and will be equivalent to 25% of the booked hours. The provision includes the allowance for absence for medical reasons. Parents are to pay childcare centres for absence days in excess of the above.
10. Service providers will not be paid nor will be able to charge for days for which parents advise at least one (1) month in advance that they will not be making use of childcare.
11. Parent/s is/are free to avail themselves of free childcare within the childcare centre of their choice (provided that the childcare centre enters into the Free Childcare Scheme agreement with Government).
12. Free Childcare is terminated once the child is eligible to enrol into Kindergarten 1.
13. The government will continue to pay for free Childcare while the mother is availing herself of maternity leave. Free Childcare is not extended to parental leave.
14. Parent/s will be able to opt either for free Childcare or the tax rebate system. More information about the tax rebate system may be accessed here www.ird.gov.mt.”



3.2. Fees and Payments

Fees are to be paid monthly in advance according to the agreed hours/day, at the established rate per hour which may also include additional days/hours. Parents will be invoiced at the beginning of each month and bills are to be settled by no later than the first week of each month. Failure to settle an unpaid fee by the stipulated time will compromise the child's place at the centre. We hold the right to replace a child's place if fees remain unsettled.

- If on the days/hours the child usually attends there is a public holiday/ the centre is closed or the child is sick/on holiday, the payments still have to be paid accordingly.
- If a child will not be able to attend the centre for a month, the fee still has to be paid, however it will be reduced by 50% as this will keep the child's place in the childcare.



4. Settling In Requirements and Transitions

When visiting our centre, parents are encouraged to bring their child/ren with them to help the child establish a positive relationship with our team from the start. This will allow them to witness the relationship between staff and parent/s, which is also reassuring for a child as he/she is settling in.

Parents are encouraged to talk to the child about the transition and start by bringing their child/ren for an hour or two initially and gradually increasing the child's stay. The parent is allowed to watch the child from the reception area as they start learning about their surroundings at this phase. This allows peace of mind both for the parent and also for the child.

Our aim is for each child to build positive, stable relationships while in our care. When possible, infants who are growing out from our baby area will be assigned a primary care-giver who will care for the child until he/she is leaving for kindergarten. This allows the child to focus on learning as they feel safe and secure in their educator's care, eliminating the stress each transition creates.

Before the child's first time in our care kindly note that:

- All of the child's belongings including clothes are labelled clearly with the child's name.
- Children are not allowed to bring their own toys to the centre.
- We are not responsible for personal items.
- Children should not attend the centre wearing jewellery. These might pose a choking hazard.
- Children must change into clean indoor shoes before entering the centre.

Parents are kindly requested to bring:

- An extra change of clothes for the child.
- 2 boxes of tissues, 2 boxes of wipes and a packet of disposable gloves upon enrolment and at the beginning of every month.
- Any other consumables such as formula milk, lunch and snacks, nappies etc.
- An A3 pocket folder for the child's crafts.
- A scrapbook for the child's personal record book.
- An extra pair of indoor shoes.

We also offer pre-kinder/ school readiness support, where we regularly chat with parents towards the last few months of childcare in terms of educational attainment and the child's prosocial development. We also offer a childcare resume for parents to take with them once the child has finished their placement with us.

4.1. Drop-off Procedure

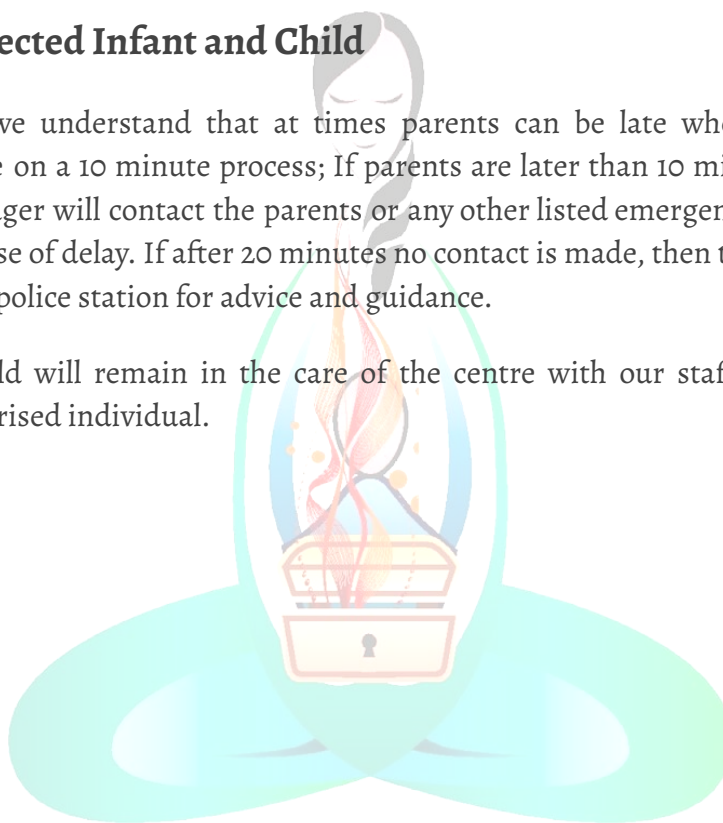
Parents are responsible for signing their child in and out on the centre register which can be found at the reception area. Those making use of the Free Childcare scheme are also responsible to punch their child IN or OUT using their key fob.

Our doors are electronically locked and only accessible for those who have authorisation. Only carers and management are allowed to escort children in and out of the centre at all times. Parent access is forbidden beyond the main playroom door unless instructed and accompanied by our management team, this is to ensure we maintain the highest level of security for all concerned.

4.2. Uncollected Infant and Child

At Little Treasure, we understand that at times parents can be late when collecting their children. We operate on a 10 minute process; If parents are later than 10 minutes in collecting their child, the manager will contact the parents or any other listed emergency contact in order to determine the cause of delay. If after 20 minutes no contact is made, then the centre Manager will contact the local police station for advice and guidance.

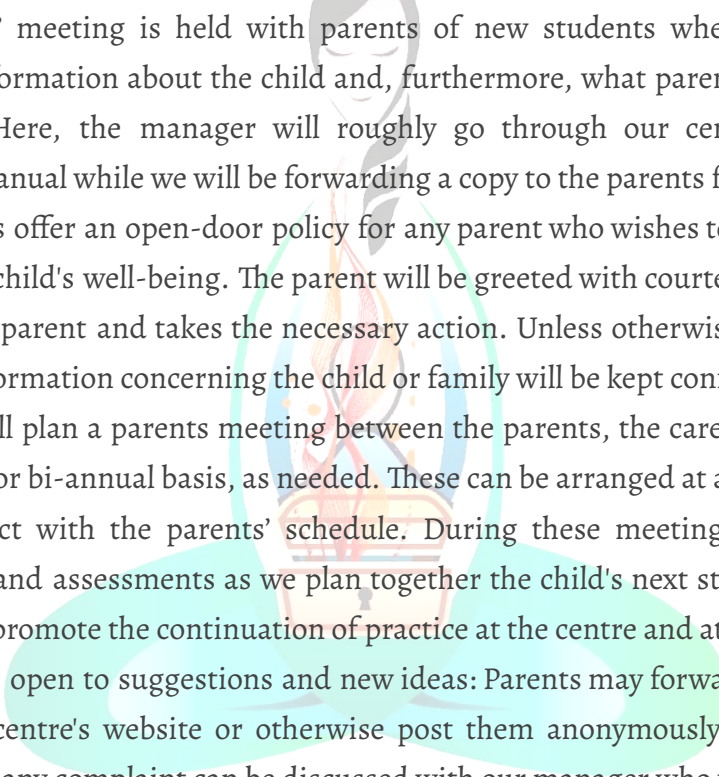
At all times, the child will remain in the care of the centre with our staff until the child is collected by an authorised individual.



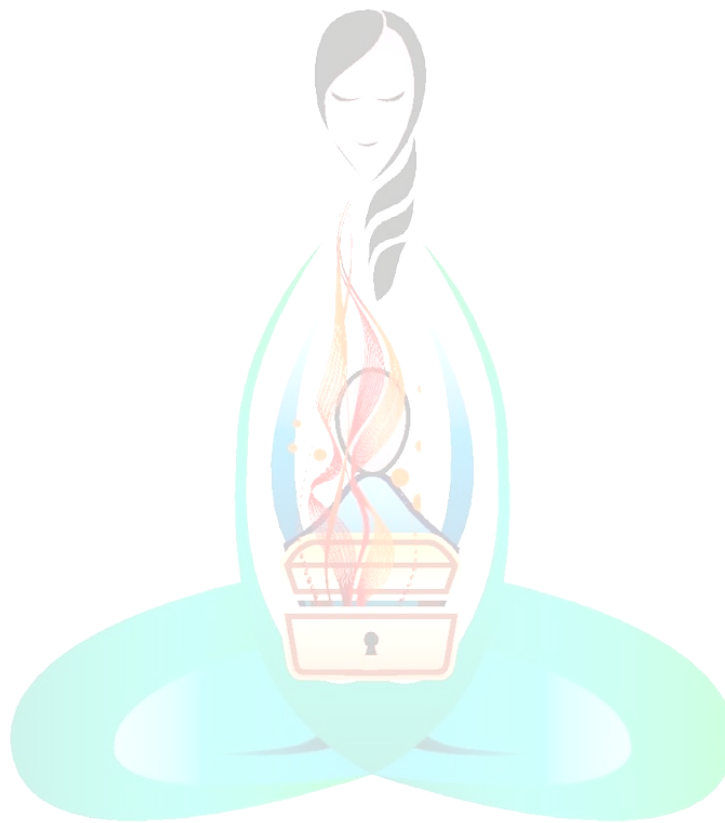
5. Working in Partnership with Parents

At Little Treasure, we believe that working in collaboration with parents will help us in delivering a supreme service which is child-centred. Parents are the primary source of information of our children therefore, we welcome and encourage the presence and involvement of parents to promote the positive welfare and development of children.

The staff members at our setting aim to form good relationships with parents to further facilitate the two-way flow of information with the parents. To further facilitate Partnership working, our centre will follow the following guidelines:

- 
- An 'induction' meeting is held with parents of new students where we will discuss necessary information about the child and, furthermore, what parent is to expect from our centre. Here, the manager will roughly go through our centre's policies and procedures manual while we will be forwarding a copy to the parents for further reading.
 - Our managers offer an open-door policy for any parent who wishes to raise a concern or discuss their child's well-being. The parent will be greeted with courtesy as the manager listens to the parent and takes the necessary action. Unless otherwise requested by the parent, all information concerning the child or family will be kept confidential.
 - Our centre will plan a parents meeting between the parents, the carer and the manager on an annual or bi-annual basis, as needed. These can be arranged at agreed times which do not conflict with the parents' schedule. During these meetings, we will discuss observations and assessments as we plan together the child's next steps. This is utmost important to promote the continuation of practice at the centre and at home.
 - We are always open to suggestions and new ideas: Parents may forward their comments through our centre's website or otherwise post them anonymously in our letter box. Furthermore, any complaint can be discussed with our manager who will further refer to our 'Complaints Policy' procedure.
 - Our carers update the parent communication app to include information related to meal times, nappy/potty information, nap times, activities the child was involved in and any further comments. When possible, the child's primary caregiver will also verbally communicate with the parent during drop-off or pick-up. This will help in keeping the parents informed about their children's progress on a daily basis.

- Our centre organises outings for which parents are invited and encouraged to join. These events will further help us in building a positive relationship to facilitate our joint cooperation in the child's welfare.
- Parents are kindly requested to keep us informed at all times in any changes to their personal circumstances which could have an effect on the child such as: bereavement, separation, illness, relocation etc.
- Our staff will contact the parents should they notice any sudden change in the child's behaviour or otherwise should they have any concerns related to the child's well-being.



5.1. Working in Partnership with Other Professionals

In order to provide the ideal family-centred service with the best outcome for the child, we collaborate with other early childhood professionals to achieve common goals. This partnership requires professional commitment and respect for the other professional's role, experience and expertise for us to be able to professionally discuss and deliver a personalised experience to our clients.

Together with other professionals:

- Our carers are aware of their own and other's roles in the child's developmental process. The manager will then discuss the involvement of other professionals with the parents and make referrals when necessary.
- Parental agreement and consent is requested before contacting and sharing any information with other professionals.
- Where and when possible, our management offers the resources and time required for a primary caregiver with the aid and guidance of our managers to pursue collaborative opportunities.
- We will collaborate, communicate and plan further action to be taken for the child's welfare and development.
- Our team members are willing to learn and adopt any suggestions given by the professional during their meeting. This will help us in achieving the best possible outcomes for our children.
- Both parties are encouraged to collaboratively develop child profiles and to keep the parent constantly informed. This will help us further review our shared goal which can lead to the development of common tools, language and understanding to achieve the best practice.

6. Equal Opportunities

Little Treasure childcare centre strives to foster a positive, safe environment which recognizes and respects the individuality of each and every child and member of staff. All children and members of staff at our centre are respected and their individuality recognised, valued and nurtured. We aim to provide an environment that promotes and reflects cultural and social diversity and is equally accessible to all.

We believe it is our ethical responsibility to celebrate the differences in each and every individual. We will encourage the recognition of the values of each individual and will not tolerate any form of discrimination.

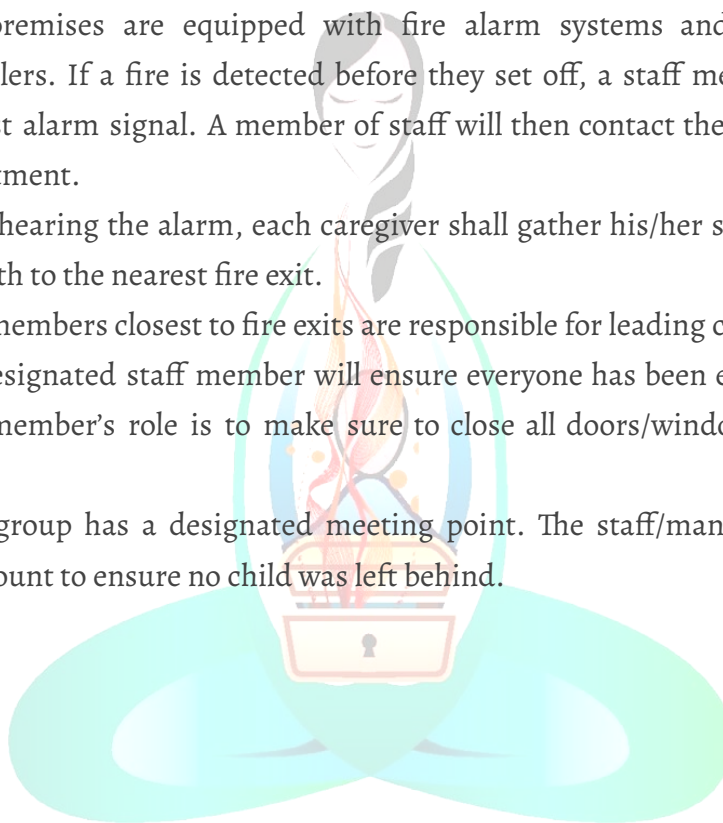
- Every child attending the centre is welcomed as an individual in his/her own right.
- Each child in our care deserves to reach his/her fullest potential. Our team will strive to aid the individual child in reaching their potential by adapting to their needs.
- Resources, visuals, language and attitudes in our centre will allow children to develop in an inclusive environment. We will allow children to question and learn about others' differences as we believe knowledge is a major principle of inclusion.
- Children of all abilities are brought together and are free to play, learn and form friendships with one another.
- Our centre is physically accessible for everyone while every child's needs are also considered when planning and preparing activities.

We aim to challenge any offensive behaviour, language or attitudes with regards to race, ethnicity, nationality, class, religion, culture, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability etc. Should any discriminatory behaviour be identified, we encourage this to be brought to our management's attention for professional assessment.

7. Emergency and Fire Evacuation Procedures

In the event of a fire/earthquake/bomb scare or any other emergency, all our staff members are aware of our 'Evacuation Procedure' which is practised every three months.

- Emergency exits are kept visible and unobstructed while each employee carries a role during the procedure.
 - The daily register in which you are kindly requested to log your child in upon drop-off, will help guide our staff in ensuring each and every child has been safely evacuated.
-
1. Our premises are equipped with fire alarm systems and smoke detection sprinklers. If a fire is detected before they set off, a staff member will pull the nearest alarm signal. A member of staff will then contact the designated rescue department.
 2. Upon hearing the alarm, each caregiver shall gather his/her students and follow the path to the nearest fire exit.
 3. Staff members closest to fire exits are responsible for leading children out.
 4. The designated staff member will ensure everyone has been evacuated. Another staff member's role is to make sure to close all doors/windows and switch off lights.
 5. Each group has a designated meeting point. The staff/management will do a headcount to ensure no child was left behind.



8. Safety of Children

We aim at providing organised and updated health and safety policies and procedures to make sure that children feel safe and secure as we protect their well-being during their time in our care. Positive health and safety measures are promoted at all times alongside excellent standards of hygiene which are both practised and encouraged. Policies and procedures with regards to the safety of children include:

- Our management and staff members are aware of possible hazards within the environment and its surroundings and do their utmost to protect the children in our care.
- Staff members are trained in paediatric first aid and food handling practices.
- Children are cared for in a smoke free environment.
- The premises, equipment and materials used by the children are cleaned on a daily basis.
- Cleaning products and other unsafe equipment are safely stored in child-proof areas.
- All medicines are kept locked and out of reach of children. Only parents may administer medicines to children. The staff are not allowed to give any medicine to the children unless the medicine is to treat life-threatening conditions. Kindly refer to our 'Medications' policy for further details.
- The Centre keeps records concerning accident and/or injury and parents can view these records in relation to their own child.
- When a child becomes ill or has an accident, the parents will be immediately informed and a carer will remain with the child until the parents' arrival.
- Strict standards of hygiene are practised for the prevention and control of the spread of infection. Staff members are aware of proper disposal measures of waste related to bodily fluids. Hands are washed frequently as necessary.
- Only the parents or authorised individuals can collect children from the centre.
- Organised outings for children require the written consent of the respective parents.

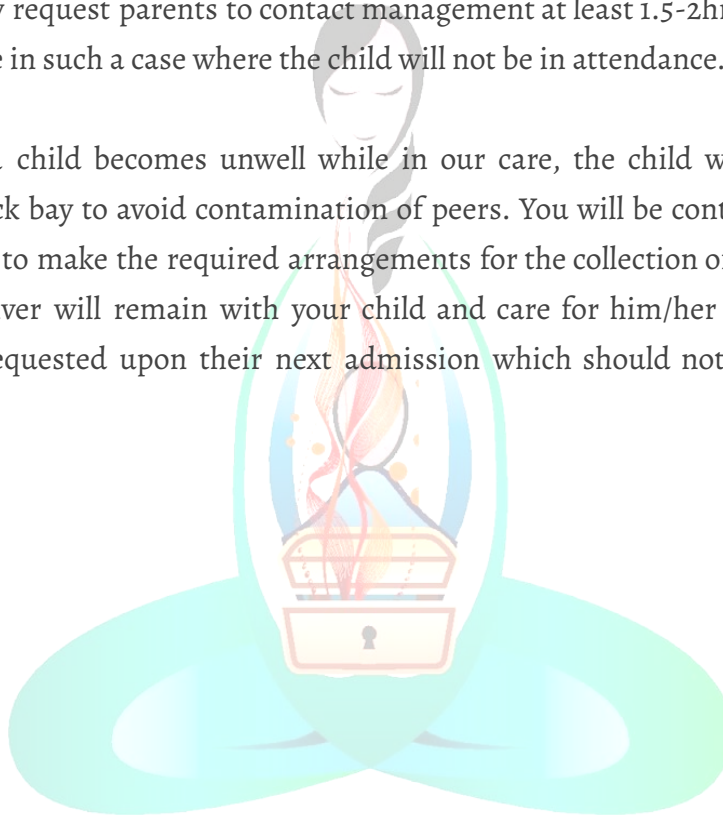
9. Sick-Child Policy

A child who appears to be ill should not be brought to our centre to avoid exposure to peers and staff. Our staff members will refuse the admission of any child who seems unfit upon drop off and a medical certificate stating the child is fit, signed by a doctor, is requested upon their next day at the centre.

A medical certificate stating that the child is well and fit to attend childcare with no possible contagious symptoms is requested upon drop off. Failure to present the certificate upon drop off or beforehand will result in the refusal of admission of the child.

We would also kindly request parents to contact management at least 1.5-2hrs before the child's usual admission time in such a case where the child will not be in attendance.

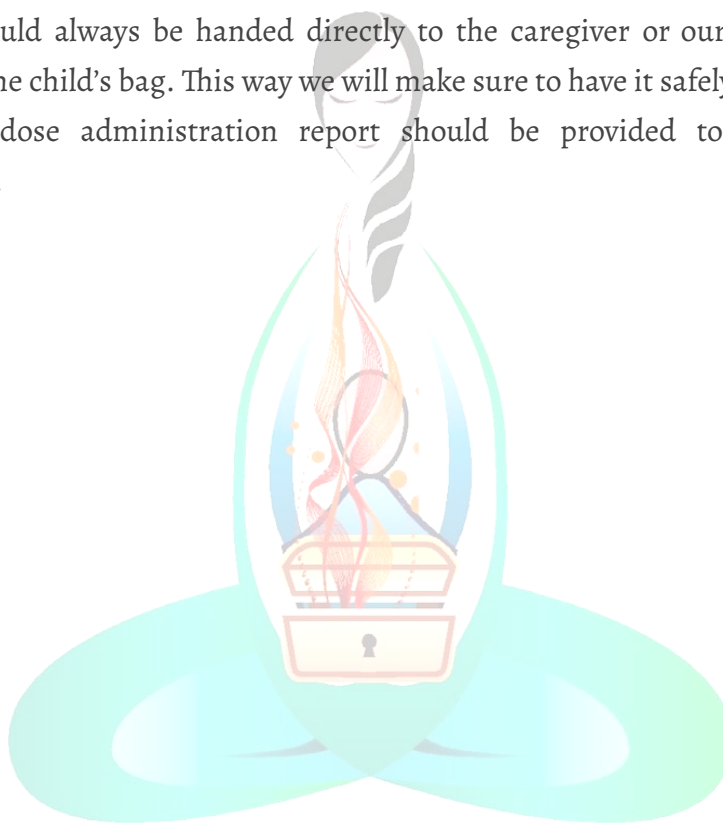
In the case where a child becomes unwell while in our care, the child will be immediately transferred to our sick bay to avoid contamination of peers. You will be contacted immediately as we kindly ask you to make the required arrangements for the collection of your child as soon as possible. A caregiver will remain with your child and care for him/her until you arrive. A certificate is also requested upon their next admission which should not be in less than 24 hours.



10. Medication

If a child is on antibiotics or any form of treatment for illness, they must stay at home. Our staff are not responsible to administer medication with the exception of life threatening conditions and with the written authorisation of a medical practitioner. The following procedures must be adhered to in such a case;

- A note stating the child's name, doctor's name, date, dosage and directions, written and signed by a professional doctor must be provided to our management. Preferably we would also request that a copy is kept in the child's bag.
- Medicine should always be handed directly to the caregiver or our management and never left in the child's bag. This way we will make sure to have it safely stored.
- A file with dose administration report should be provided to the caregiver or management.



10.1. Immunisation

Our centres recommend that children are age-appropriately immunised while in our care. The following is the National Immunisation Schedule⁵ for children up to three years:

Age	Vaccine
From 8 weeks	DTaP-Hib-IPV-HepB (6 in 1) 1 + PCV 1 + Men B 1
3 months	DTaP-Hib-IPV-HepB (6 in 1) 2 + Men ACWY (1)
4 months	DTaP-Hib-IPV-HepB (6 in 1) 3 + PCV 2 + Men B 2
12 months	PCV 3 + Men B (3)
13 months	MMR1 + Men ACWY (2)
18 months	DTaP-Hib-IPV-HepB (4)

10.2. Allergies and Dietary Requirements

Upon registration or if later determined, parents are kindly requested to discuss any allergies their child is known to, or is at high risk of, suffer from. A written description signed by a medical professional should be presented. The management and staff shall take all the precautions necessary for the well-being of the child. In case of student/s with life threatening allergies, we may notify the rest of the parents /staff in writing for the food item/ ingredients not to be provided or brought to our centre.

The same precautions are also set for children with dietary preferences for any reason such as vegan/vegetarian lifestyles, religious beliefs. We operate a strict anti-discrimination policy. No child shall be discriminated upon for their dietary requirements.

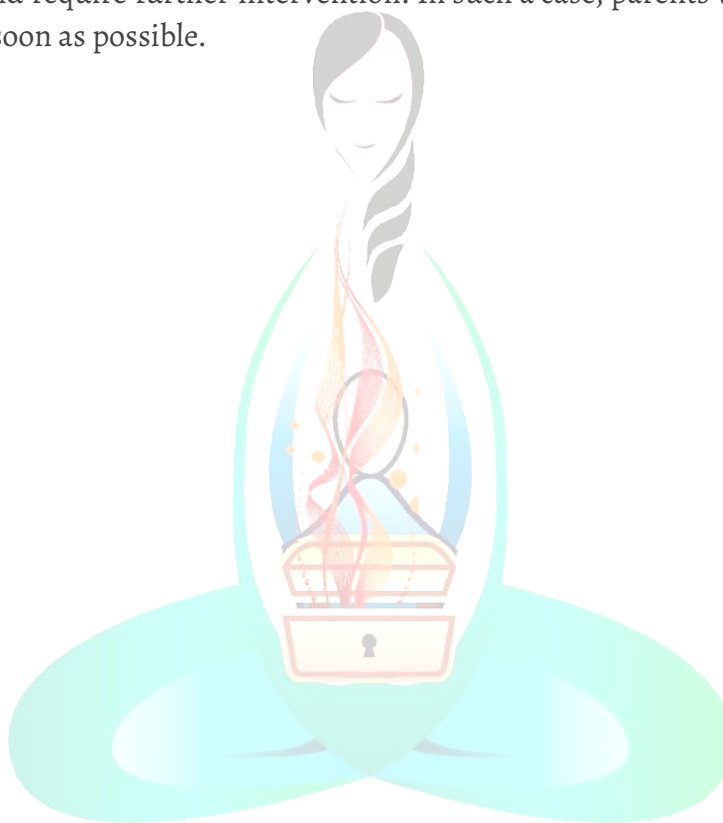
⁵ National Immunisation Schedule (2020) Available:
<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/phc/pchyhi/Pages/National-Immunisation-Schedule.aspx> [15/09/22]

11. Accident Management Policy

If a child or member of staff is involved in an accident at our centre, he/she will receive the required first-aid by a staff member.

Any accident, big or small, occurring in our care will be recorded in our 'Accident Report' sheet. This shall state the date/time/location/ first aid given and by who along with a signature from the caregiver, management and eventually parents upon presentation of the report.

Parents/Guardians are kindly requested to read and sign the consent form attached to their registration form pack which allows our staff to seek medical assistance in the event of accidents which would require further intervention. In such a case, parents will be contacted by our management as soon as possible.



11.1. Biting Policy

It is quite distressing for any parent to learn that her/his child has been hurt in any way while away from home. Biting may at times occur as a result of discomfort in the gums (e.g. while teething), however, at times, this could be a sign of other underlying issues (such as family problems or transitions) which are causing distress to the biter. Such behaviour is not tolerated in our centre, however, our intention is to identify and address the root cause of such behaviour first and foremost.

Our carers provide an excellent standard of supervision, however, some incidents of pinching, scratching, pushing, biting, ect. do sometimes happen unfortunately. Most of the time these incidents happen extremely quickly and are usually the result of a disagreement over a favourite toy between children. For every unlucky incident the carers will have successfully averted numerous such potential incidents. The following is the policy we adopt for dealing with anti-social behaviour including biting.

The first occurrence: First of all the hurt child will be comforted. Most times a hurt child recovers extremely fast. First aid is applied as needed. The biter is later shown that his/her action has caused distress to the other child so as to teach him/her empathy, while we encourage the child to apologise. The incident will be recorded in the incident book and the parents of both parties are informed of the situation. The biter's record will not be shown to the parent of the hurt child as this will disclose the name of the biter and goes against our policy of confidentiality and possibly cause conflict. As a first occasion this incident can be accepted as a one-off incident and most of the time this behaviour will not be repeated.

The second time: If the child bites for a second time or even shows an intention to bite a child at the centre, the child shall be removed from the group for a short while so as to not have other students in danger. The child will still be cared for by another care-giver in the meantime.

The biter's parents will be notified straight away and will be asked to set up a meeting with our manager and their child's primary care-giver to discuss possible underlying causes.

The next occurrence: If the discussed strategies to identify and deal with the behaviour do not seem to be working, we would be obliged to seek additional help from other professionals.

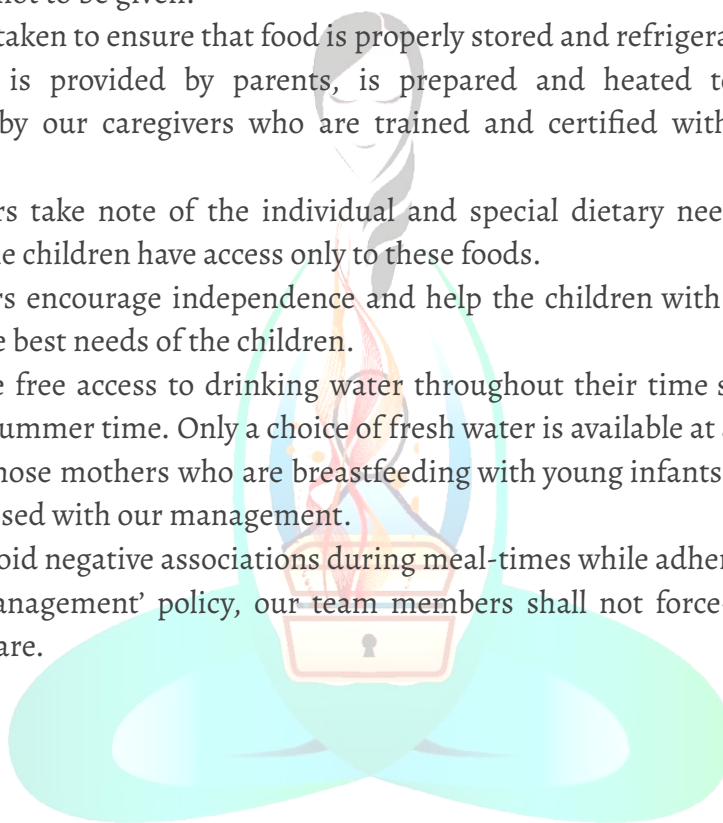
If the biting keeps on re-occurring, our management holds the right to terminate the child's position at our centre, so that no further harm will come to the other children in our care.

12. Healthy Eating Policy

As the early years of a child are the building blocks for their future, healthy eating habits are highly encouraged and maintained while children are in our care. Our service provision recognises the benefits of a healthy diet and we kindly ask parents to provide healthy nutritious meals and snacks for their children.

Our staff members take careful note of any special dietary requirements and also ensure that children receive the help they need in feeding.

- Parents are encouraged to provide healthy food for their children, unhealthy food such as sweets are not to be given.
- Every care is taken to ensure that food is properly stored and refrigerated.
- Food, which is provided by parents, is prepared and heated to the appropriate temperature by our caregivers who are trained and certified with a Food Handling Qualification.
- Staff members take note of the individual and special dietary needs of children and ensure that the children have access only to these foods.
- Staff members encourage independence and help the children with feeding in the way that meets the best needs of the children.
- Children have free access to drinking water throughout their time spent at the centre, especially in summer time. Only a choice of fresh water is available at all times.
- We support those mothers who are breastfeeding with young infants, support measures may be discussed with our management.
- In order to avoid negative associations during meal-times while adhering to our 'Positive Behaviour Management' policy, our team members shall not force-feed any students within their care.



13. Child Protection Policy

At Little Treasure, we recognise that children are vulnerable in many ways and it is the adult's duty to protect their welfare. In instances of suspected abuse, the centre management shall follow this procedure and ultimately, may be required to report their findings to the necessary authorities (Agencija Appogg/MEDE).

In this context, abuse is any sign that a child is: Neglected, physically abused, sexually abused, emotionally abused.

Signs include:

- Failure to protect the child from exposure of any kind of danger resulting in impairment of health and development,
- Physical injury or failure to prevent physical injury to a child,
- The use of children for sexual intentions,
- Emotionally abusive acts such as bullying, humiliating, discrimination, rejecting etc.

When parents sign our registration forms, they are accepting all of our company's Policies and procedures including our safeguarding procedure which goes as follows:

- Our team is trained to recognise signs of abuse and is instructed to report their findings to our centre management.
- The management shall take record of the caregivers' account and any evidence available and furthermore look into the allegations themselves.
- After analysing their findings, the management shall consult with the parents and obtain information as to how and why the child is being allegedly abused.
- Explanations given are accepted and no accusations shall be made.

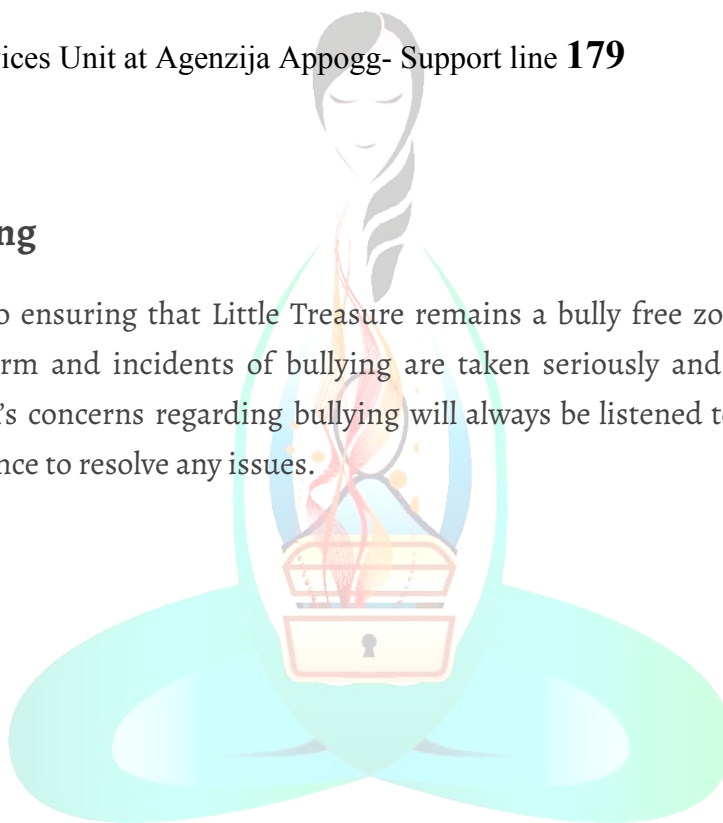
- A record of the encounter is saved in the child's file and shall not be disclosed to anyone other than authorised individuals on a need-to-know basis.
- If the identified abuse is repeated, the management shall report the suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities for professional investigation.

Our 'Whistle-Blower Policy' shall also safeguard children while in our care. If any member of staff is accused of abuse, he/she is suspended during the period of investigation.

Child Protection Services Unit at Agenzija Appogg- Support line **179**

13.1. **Bullying**

We are committed to ensuring that Little Treasure remains a bully free zone. Bullying is not acceptable in any form and incidents of bullying are taken seriously and investigated fully. Parents and children's concerns regarding bullying will always be listened to and we will work with them in confidence to resolve any issues.



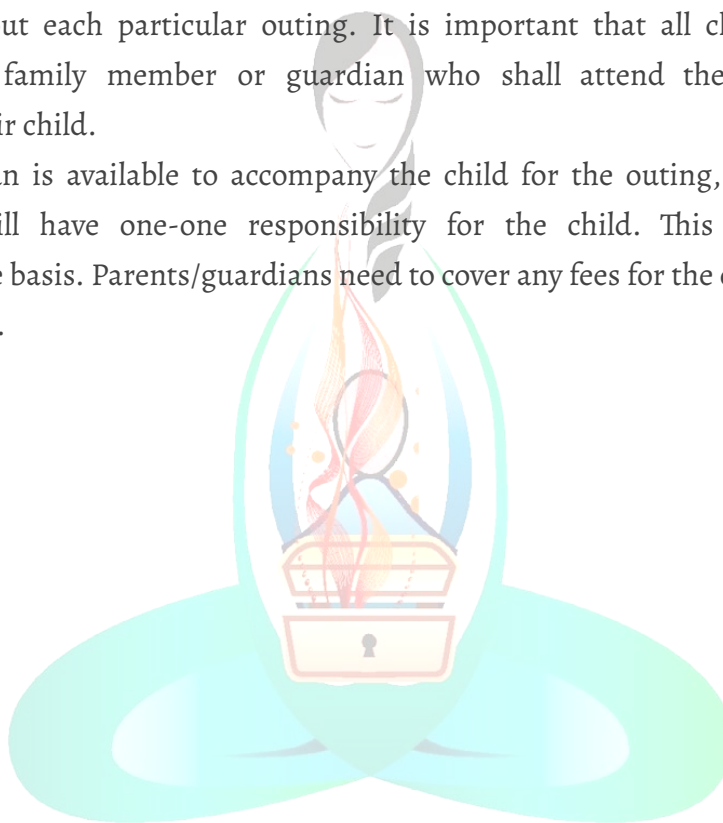
15. Activities and Outings

Our centres also plan educational outings for children to support and enhance their development. We believe these outings provide children with opportunities that extend their knowledge and interest and let them have new experiences.

Little Treasure Child Care Centres strongly believes in partnership working and we find these outings to be an important tool in our relationship with parents. While they help the child have quality time with their parent/guardian while the parent/guardian may also build positive relationships with the carers.

Please take note of the outing slip/announcements posted, prior to any outing. This will have all the information about each particular outing. It is important that all children have to be accompanied by a family member or guardian who shall attend the outing and take responsibility for their child.

If no parent/guardian is available to accompany the child for the outing, if there is a carer available, he/she will have one-one responsibility for the child. This is available on a first-come-first serve basis. Parents/guardians need to cover any fees for the outing for the child and carer in this case.



15. Environment, Premises and Equipment

Our centres are designed in a sectioned open plan set-up which is welcoming for children to explore and learn through play, making the premises suitable for the service provided. The premises are safe, secure and accessible for all. The furnishings and equipment are suited to the needs of children and are kept in a good state of cleanliness and repair at all times. The following are the standards present in our settings:

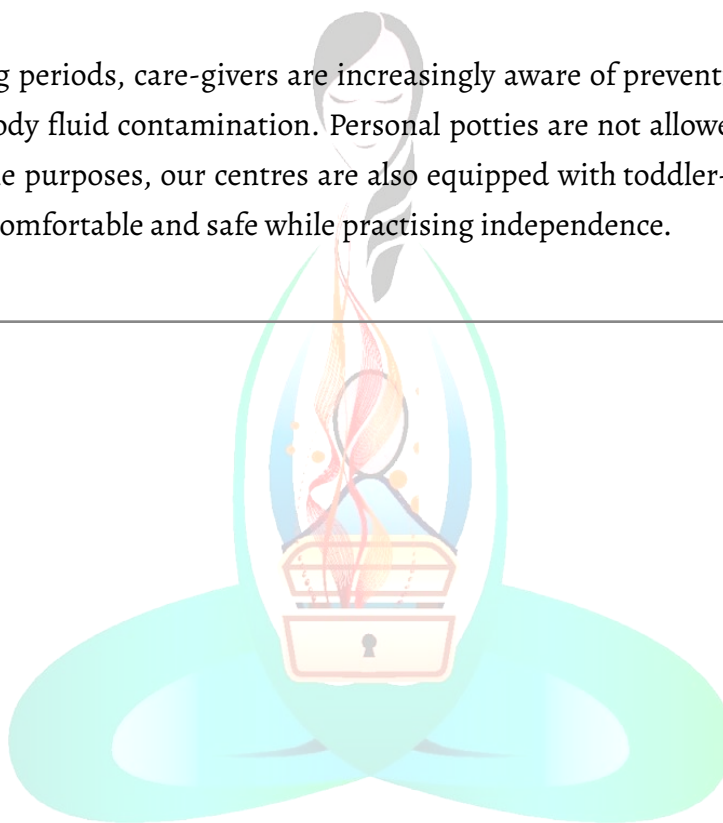
- Security gates.
- Shatter-proof glass.
- Out-of-reach power sockets.
- Protective covering for corners and doors.
- Child-proof locks.
- Non-slip flooring.
- 5m² of accessible space per child allowing them to engage in both indoor and outdoor activities (outdoor area is 20% of the total indoor area).- Our centres have been certified and passed to this standard, according to the National Standards (2021).
- The environment allows staff to supervise, engage with children and is spacious enough to allow the free movement of children between different areas/activities.
- The centre and equipment are in compliance with regulations and standards of safety and complies with an independent 'Health and Safety Audit Certificate' which is conducted every year.
- The premises are kept in a good state of cleanliness and repair.
- All toys and equipment are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Cleaning equipment is safely stored and locked away out of reach of any child.
- Only authorised persons are permitted entry.
- Ventilation, providing a flow of fresh air.
- Natural sunlight is present at all times.
- Air and water temperature control systems.
- Fresh drinking water available at all times.
- Designated quiet/rest areas.

15.1. Hygiene Policy

Our premises are kept well maintained and cleaned on a daily basis by designated staff members who are employed strictly for these responsibilities and are present at the centre daily. Apart from our cleaning staff, our caregivers are also trained in handling sanitary procedures to minimise risks of cross contamination, infections and other health risks. Some of these procedures include the use of disposable gloves when handling children or items with body fluids and constant hand washing is encouraged.

Positive hygiene practices are also encouraged with our children such as hand washing, covering up coughs using their hands and wiping away noses using tissues which are disposed of after use, among others.

During potty training periods, care-givers are increasingly aware of prevention procedures due to a higher risk of body fluid contamination. Personal potties are not allowed to be brought to our centre for hygiene purposes, our centres are also equipped with toddler-sized toilets which ensure children feel comfortable and safe while practising independence.



16. CCTV and Monitoring

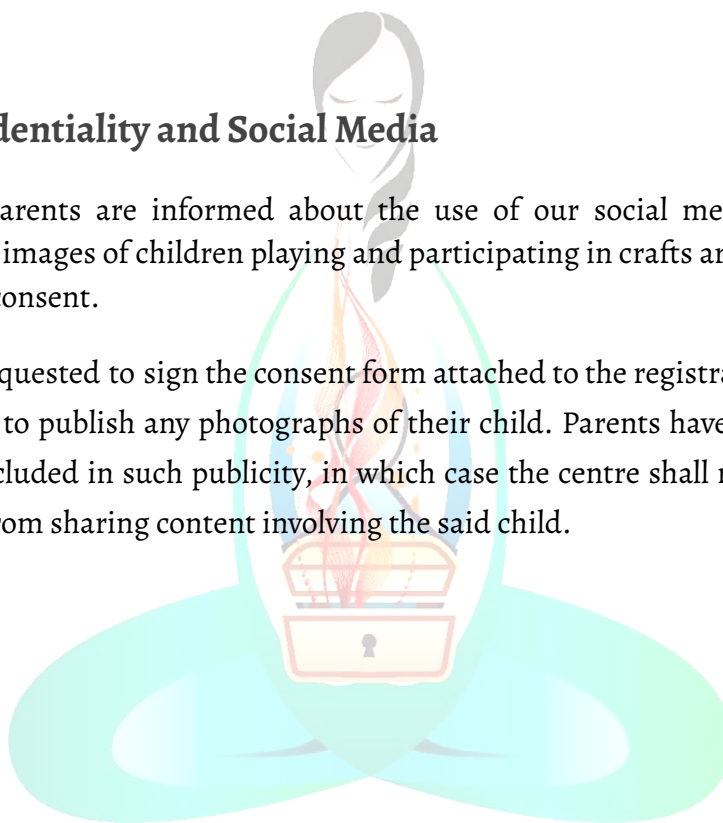
Our centres are equipped with close-circuit monitoring across all areas except for bathrooms for security purposes. The purpose of CCTV monitoring is to ensure children and caregivers are safe, preventing violence or theft in the setting. These also ensure children are being cared for according to our policies and procedures and footage may be used to identify wrong-doings or even to identify cases of unwitnessed injury. All records concerning children will remain confidential unless they are subject to investigation by local authorities.

The CCTV systems are upon the managing director's responsibilities of operation. Monitoring shall only be used for proper purposes and only in the best interest of all the stakeholders involved. Data shall only be used according to data protection laws.

16.1. Confidentiality and Social Media

Upon registration parents are informed about the use of our social media platforms and website. Appropriate images of children playing and participating in crafts are used ONLY when parents have signed consent.

Parents are kindly requested to sign the consent form attached to the registration form pack for our centre to be able to publish any photographs of their child. Parents have the right to refuse having their child included in such publicity, in which case the centre shall respect the parents' choices and refrain from sharing content involving the said child.



17. Personal Records

Our centre is committed to ensuring that all the data collected about members of staff, children and their families is kept strictly confidential and will be disclosed only on a need to know basis or to authorised persons.

All the information requested is vital in assisting us to provide the best possible individual care for our children and shall not be used for any other intention. This information is also available to be viewed by the authorised parents/guardians or, if needed by, local authorities upon request as they are safely stored by our management.

Parents will be invited to attend regular progress meetings where their child's records and information will be made available for parents to see and to discuss accordingly. Our staff members are also trained in keeping confidential information and shall not discuss sensitive or any other information with other adults or peers unless they are authorised to do so. Furthermore, the centre maintains confidentiality with all of our stakeholders in line with the Data Protection Act.

- Children's personal records include registration and admission forms, signed consent forms, and correspondence concerning the child or family, an ongoing record of relevant contact with parents, and observations by staff on any confidential matter involving the child, such as developmental concerns or child protection matters.
- These confidential records are stored and are kept secure by the Manager in a suitably safe place.
- Parents have access to the files and records of their own children but do not have access to information about any other children.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs.
- Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the role of the key person.
- Records of individual children or employees are held for one year after their departure.
- Relevant details of all members of staff are held in confidence and therefore with access limited to only the manager, the director and the individual themselves.
- Details of salary amendments are held by the Manager in the office.
- Roasters, sick leave and leave papers are all treated with confidentiality and kept in the office.

18. Whistleblowing Policy

Our whistleblowing policy is especially designated to tackle any form of abuse witnessed within our centres. If a parent or staff member witnesses misconduct, they should report the issue to the appropriate party as soon as possible.

Concerns include:

- A breach of the nursery's policies.
- Falls below established standards of practice.
- amounts to improper conduct, such as;
 - a breach of the law
 - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - a possible miscarriage of justice
 - a Health & Safety risk
 - damage in the environment
 - corruption or unethical conduct
 - abuse of children, students or other users
 - deliberate concealment of any of these matters
 - any other substantial and relevant concern

Useful contact details:

Agenzija Appogg: 179

Jobs Plus Free Childcare Scheme: freechildcare@gov.mt /22201137/8

MEDE/ DQSE: customercare.dqse@gov.mt/ 2598 1400

19. Complaints Procedure

At Little Treasure, we aim to deliver positive, daily experiences both for the child, and also for the parents. We constantly strive to improve our services to provide a premium experience, therefore, we are constantly revising and updating our procedures. As our customers, you would be helping us grow by forwarding any suggestions you may have; either by contacting our management directly, or otherwise, by privately posting your comments in our letter box.

Your comments and suggestions will be professionally reviewed and evaluated as to how they can be adapted at our centre.

Furthermore, our staff will gladly be there to promptly listen to any concerns you may have in regards to your child's well being.

While we anticipate that most concerns may be resolved quickly by an informal approach, you are kindly requested to forward them to the management and not our caregivers. This way, we will make sure to treat the issue in a professional, timely manner while making sure it does not reoccur.

If this does not achieve the desired results, we may deal with such concerns in the following manner;

- The parent/s forward their complaint to the manager, which then will ask them to fill out and sign our Parent/Guardian complaint form.
- The parent/s will receive an acknowledgment for the raised concerns, when possible, including the following details:
 - (i) specific indication of how the concern will be dealt with.
 - (ii) whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why.
 - (iii) information of any further support available.
- The complaint is discussed privately and separately, at the manager's office with all parties involved.
- The manager reaches out to the parent/s with a final outcome of the discussion/investigation.

Should the parent/s wish to pursue their complaint further, they can do so by contacting the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) on 25981414 or customercare.dqse@gov.mt.

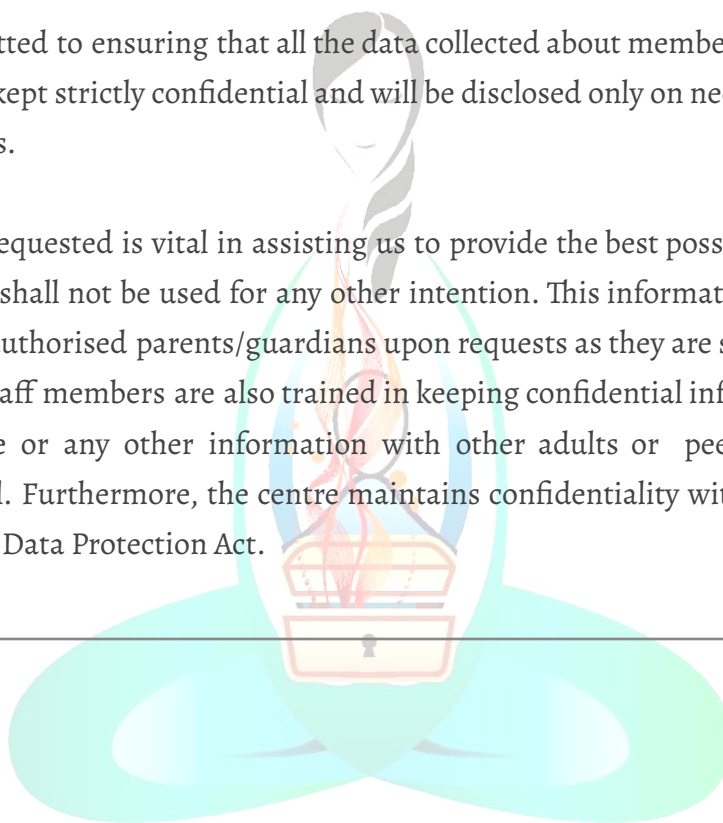
Our management and team will not tolerate any negative behaviour from any other stakeholder's end and reserve the right to request the individual to exit the premises. This includes raising one's voice, using inappropriate language among others.

The child's position within our centres will also be evaluated in the presence of abusive behaviour demonstrated by the parent/care-giver. Complaints can and should always be handled in a calm, courteous manner from each party involved.

20. Data Protection Policy

Our centre is committed to ensuring that all the data collected about members of staff, children and their families is kept strictly confidential and will be disclosed only on need to know basis or to authorised persons.

All the information requested is vital in assisting us to provide the best possible individual care for our children and shall not be used for any other intention. This information is also available to be viewed by the authorised parents/guardians upon requests as they are safely stored by our management. Our staff members are also trained in keeping confidential information and shall not discuss sensitive or any other information with other adults or peers unless they are authorised personnel. Furthermore, the centre maintains confidentiality with all of the service users in line with the Data Protection Act.



21. Internal Review Process

At Little Treasure, we strive at delivering a high quality service to our clients according to the latest National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years) (2021). To identify and meet our set goals, we have a number of processes put into practice.

Effective internal review processes need reliable data collection, thorough analysis and reflection in identifying priority targets. Our data collection processes include:

Internal Stakeholder Data:

- Staff Meetings are carried out in our centres every few weeks.
- Individual Staff Meetings carried out on a bi-annual basis and as needed.
- Our open-Door policy allows individuals to address their concerns on a daily basis.

External Stakeholder Data:

- Parent's meetings are held on an annual/ bi-annual basis and as needed.
- Daily communication with the centre manager and child carer is allowed to discuss any immediate concerns.
- Feedback forms are distributed annually and reports may remain anonymous.
- Our open-Door policy allows individuals to address their concerns on a daily basis.
- Concerns may also be forwarded using the inbox of our social media platforms and centre website.
- Meetings with other professionals are held as needed.

Our mailbox may be used by our stakeholders to forward anonymous comments on a daily basis. Anonymous complaints and/or recommendations shall be valued and reviewed as needed.

Our general manager and managers regularly discuss and analyse the data collected and together strive to improve the service provided. Reflection sessions between the managing body are used to identify the ideal targets and means of achievement through an action plan.

22. Child Carers' Policies

Apart from selecting the most fit for purpose individuals, the management at Little Treasure Childcare Centres is committed to provide quality supervision to the employees representing our business. We aim at maintaining correlative duties, clearly stating and agreeing expected work standards and ensuring training and development opportunities are identified, facilitated and evaluated.

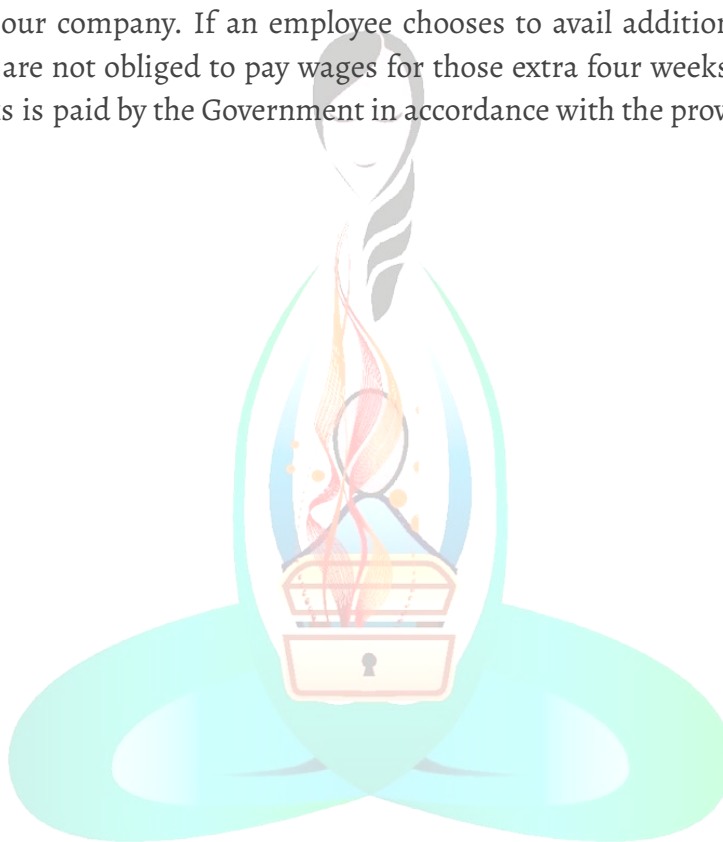
Employee policies and responsibilities include:

- Individuals shall take responsibility for their own performance and learning, ensuring it is integrated into their everyday practice.
- Reflect and learn from their work experience, training and development opportunities.
- Prepare for and take part in supervision under the arrangements agreed.
- Take any action discussed during performance appraisal; to improve performance and enhance their effectiveness.
- Once a position is established, employees may be asked by the Childcare Manager to provide training to fellow colleagues.
- Employees must report to work on time.
- Work attire must be adequate and appropriate.
- Answering childcare centre calls is prohibited unless instructed by management.
- Mobile phones should be kept in the employee's personal bags and only used with permission.
- Staff members must contact the management a minimum of 2 hours before their scheduled shift when they are sick.
- Political, religious and any controversial discussions should be avoided in the premises.
- Foul and abusive language or shouting is strictly prohibited.
- Children should be refereed by their proper names and any form of labelling is prohibited.
- Discrimination of any kind with children is strictly prohibited.
- When the manager is not on site, employees must report everything to the supervisor.
- No smoking is allowed within the premises of the childcare centre.
- Staff members must never give food to children unless the food belongs to the child.
- Employees must respect the confidentiality of the childcare centre and adhere to the rules of professional secrecy.
- Each employee should have knowledge of the policies and procedures of the centre and adhere to them.

22.1. Maternity Leave

Women workers have the right to maternity leave as guaranteed under Maltese law⁶. Maternity leave is 126 consecutive days (18 weeks). Of these 126 days, 42 days (6 weeks) is the compulsory entitlement and is taken after birth. Four weeks leave may be taken before birth while the remaining leave (8 weeks) may be taken immediately before or after birth as an employee may request. If a worker is unable to avail the 4- week pre-natal leave before birth, this may be availed after confinement. An employee must inform the employer of her intention to avail maternity leave at least four weeks before the maternity leave begins.

Income: Workers on maternity leave are entitled to full wages during the first 14 weeks which are paid directly by our company. If an employee chooses to avail additional maternity leave beyond 14 weeks, we are not obliged to pay wages for those extra four weeks. A maternity leave benefit for four weeks is paid by the Government in accordance with the provisions of the Social Security Act.



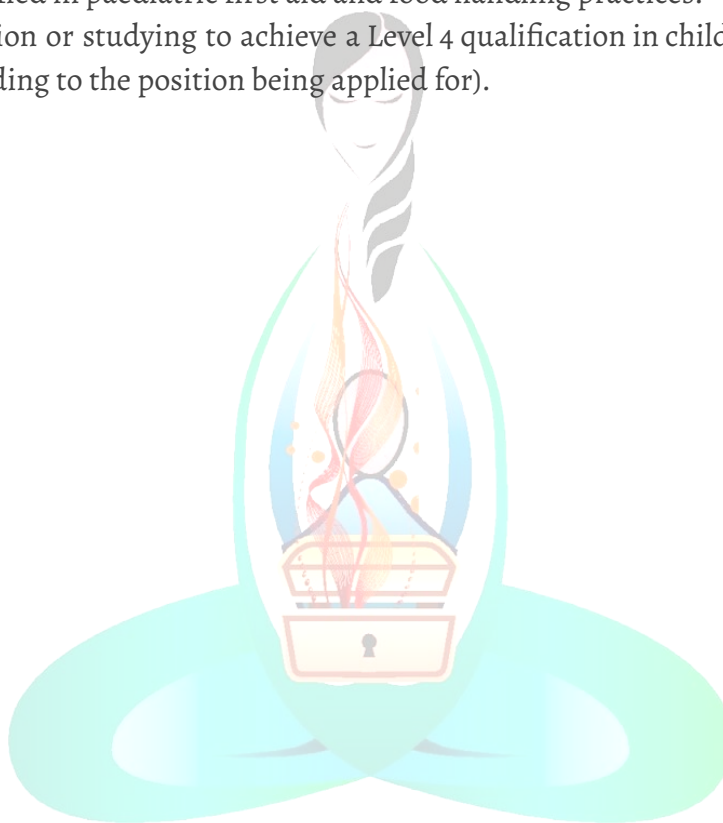
⁶ Legizlazzjoni Malta (2004) *Protection of Maternity (Employment) Regulations*, Available: <https://legislation.mt/eli/sl/452.91/eng/pdf> [20/09/22]

23. Staff Recruitment and Training

At Little Treasure, we are motivated to provide the best possible care for our children, and in order to do so, we aim at employing only team members who meet our recruitment criteria. These members must be dedicated to providing quality care and are committed to working in accordance with our policies and procedures.

The criteria include:

- The applicant must be aged 18 years or over.
- Be in possession of a recent, clean police conduct.
- Must be qualified in paediatric first aid and food handling practices.
- Be in possession or studying to achieve a Level 4 qualification in childcare (or equivalent needed according to the position being applied for).



23.1. Employee Induction

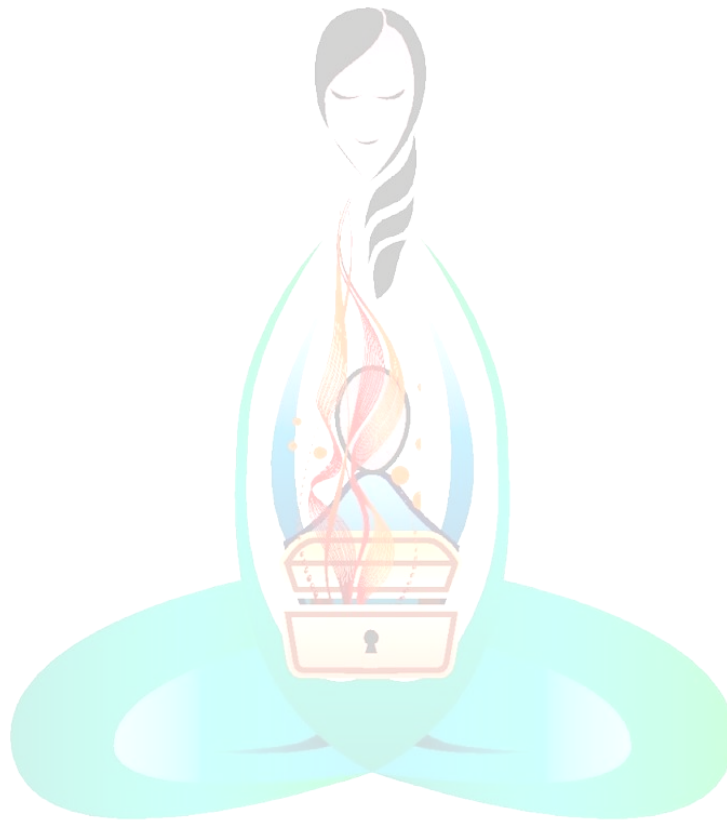
During the first few days of any newly appointed employment position, the individual will be requested to pass through the following induction format;

1. During the first day of employment the individual will be given an initial tour of the centre, in doing so will be introduced to other members of staff, children/infants. They will be specifically told of the hierarchy of the existing members of staff in order for the individuals to become aware of who he/she needs to report to in the event of an emergency.
2. During the centre tour, the individual will be made aware of all accessible areas, those that are/are not restricted to certain stakeholders. Staff areas such as lockers, staff eating areas, toilets will be shown. Moreover, Fire and Emergency access areas/locations and centre plans will be shown. During this stage, the individual will be made aware of the Fire & Emergency Procedure Manual that is located in the administration office. It is the duty of the Centre Manager to point out key aspects of the centre during the tour, such as Health and Safety aspects of the day-to-day functions of the centre. Separate training sessions will be given for each Company Policy.
3. Each individual will be given their own specific Job Description and Contract of Employment during the induction process, of which must be signed and witnessed by all parties. This ensures that each individual is fully aware of their role, professional code of care and main responsibilities.
4. The individual will also be made aware of their responsibility to make themselves available for periodic staff training, which may at times be conducted out-of centre hours. As part of their employment contract, the individual must adhere to completing areas of training that are designed to enhance their own continuous professional development.

Induction Completion

The induction process will be drawn to a close once the Centre Manager feels that the newly appointed member of staff is fully aware of all the main areas and responsibilities of his/her role and the Companies Manual of Procedure. The Centre Manager will ensure that the induction process has been documented and signed by the new member of staff. During this debriefing period, the new member of staff will be given the opportunity to ask about any concerns he/she may have. This discourse will be documented appropriately and formed part of an individual's personal file, sitting alongside their qualifications and other respective paperwork.

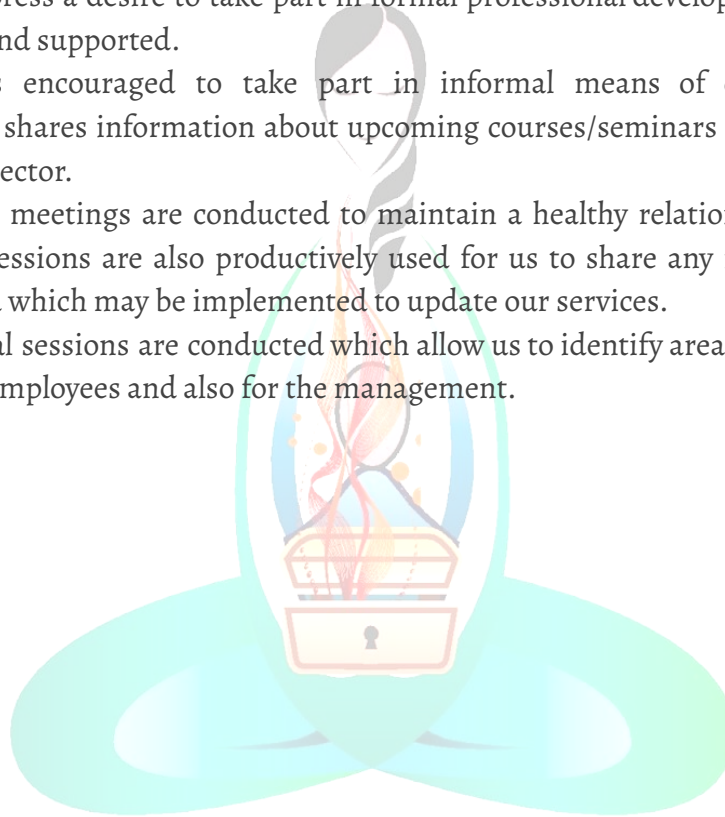
The Company is fully aware that issues discussed during the induction period will form part of the ongoing staff training schedule and will act as refresher training topics. In addition, the Company is aware that all individual needs of new staff must be taken into consideration, whereby the speed in which the induction process is concluded will be at the speed of the individual him/herself.



23.2. Staff Development

We recognise that in order for us to deliver the service our clients deserve, we must keep ourselves up to date with the latest knowledge and developments with regards to children's care. Our company believes that success is achieved when we focus on learning as a continuous process therefore, staff members are carefully chosen to meet our needs as a learning organisation and are further encouraged to broaden their knowledge and skills through the following procedures:

- New recruits are carefully selected according to our requirements and are then given an adequate induction period.
- Staff who express a desire to take part in formal professional development practices are encouraged and supported.
- Our team is encouraged to take part in informal means of development. Our management shares information about upcoming courses/seminars taking place which relate to our sector.
- Regular team meetings are conducted to maintain a healthy relationship between our staff. These sessions are also productively used for us to share any new knowledge we have achieved which may be implemented to update our services.
- Staff appraisal sessions are conducted which allow us to identify areas for improvement; both for our employees and also for the management.

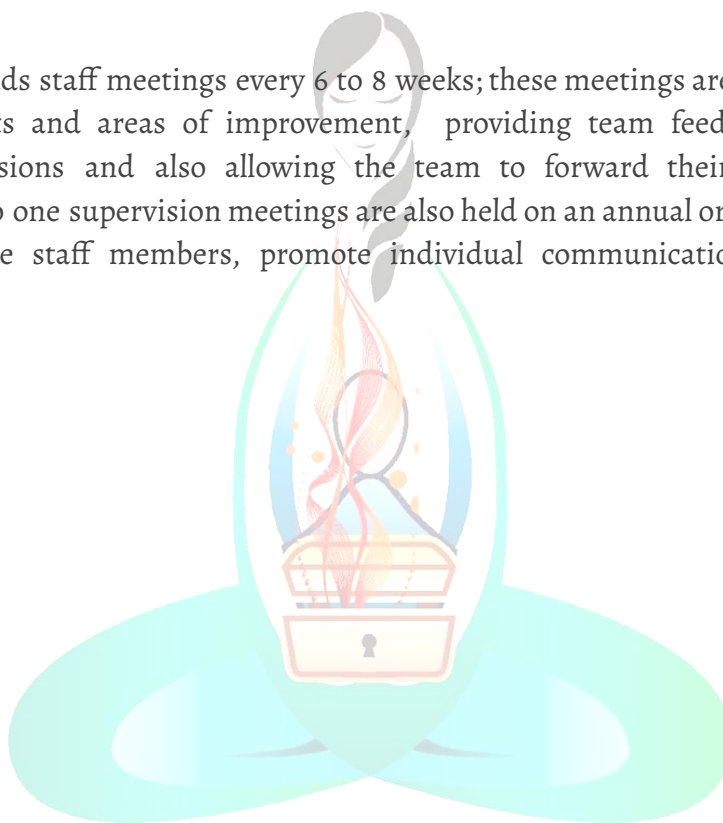


23.3. Staff Supervision

To ensure that our children are cared for by staff with the necessary aptitude and skills to provide a good quality level of care, our managing team will supervise and monitor staff members to analyse work practices. Supervision will allow our management to support team members in achieving work-based goals, motivation, enhancing performance, reaching objectives etc which will ultimately enhance the quality of their individual and team performance.

Positive communication standards are effectively used to develop staff effectiveness and identify the needs of individual members and an open-door procedure ensures two-way communication practices.

The management holds staff meetings every 6 to 8 weeks; these meetings are used to effectively discuss achievements and areas of improvement, providing team feedback, professional development discussions and also allowing the team to forward their feedback to the management. One to one supervision meetings are also held on an annual or semi-annual basis which help motivate staff members, promote individual communication and determine individual needs.



24. Student Policies

Our company recognizes that every individual should be offered the opportunity to learn and further their knowledge for personal development. At Little Treasure we aim at supporting students by providing individuals the opportunity to carry out their study placement hours in our centres, when possible.

Student policies and responsibilities include:

- Students must report on time for their placement.
 - Students must wear what is requested for their placement. Attire must be adequate and appropriate.
 - Answering childcare centre calls or opening the main door is prohibited.
 - Mobile phones should be kept in their personal bags and only used with permission.
 - Students must call when they are sick before their placement.
 - Political, religious and any controversial discussions should be avoided.
 - Foul and abusive language or shouting is strictly prohibited.
 - Children should be refereed by their proper names and any form of labelling is prohibited.
 - Discrimination of any kind with children is strictly prohibited.
 - When the manager is not on site, students must report everything to the supervisor.
 - No smoking is allowed within the premises of the childcare centre.
 - Students must never give food to children unless the food belongs to the child.
 - Students must respect the confidentiality of the childcare centre and adhere to the rules of professional secrecy.
 - Students must report to the manager any emergencies or any difficulties in their placement.
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25. Appendices and Forms

- Application Form
- Consent Forms
- Complaint Form
- Injury Report
- Policies- Parent Agreement Form
- Policies- Employee Agreement Form
- Cleaning Routine
- Little Treasure Marsascala Fire Exit and First Aid Kit Location Plan
- Little Treasure Zebbug Fire Exit and First Aid Kit Location Plan

