

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Policy statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection.

Key points

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the person responsible for coordinating and deciding on next steps and actions when there is a concern. DSLs receive specialist training for their roles, they must ensure all staff understand the policies and procedures and keep up to date with any changes to these. We have four trained DSLs. It is important that all staff always have access to a trained DSL. The DSLs for the setting are displayed on the notice board.

Recognising abuse

Abuse towards children can take many forms. Children may be at risk from adults, their peers, or their environment. It can take place in any family, institution, or community centre, in person, on the telephone, on the internet and in many other forms.

A child may be directly involved or be a witness to it; both can have a significant impact on the health and emotional wellbeing of a child. Children who have additional learning needs or those who are non-verbal are more likely to be at risk from abuse. Equally those who are in an environment whereby there are mental health challenges or substance misuse statistically have a higher prevalence to being abused.

Although there are specific indicators of some types of abuse, some general indicators or causes for concern may include:

- change in what is 'typical' behaviour for the child
- deterioration in wellbeing
- unexplained bruising, marks, or signs of neglect
- becoming withdrawn
- being overly emotional
- isolation
- struggle to build relationships with others

- disclosure from the child
- inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or persons working with the children. Such as inappropriate sexual comments, excessive one to one attention beyond the requirements of the role and inappropriate sharing of images

Abuse can often be difficult to recognise in young children not only due to developing language, but also because their behaviour can fluctuate regularly due to their age and stage of development.

Categories of abuse

Physical – any deliberate physical hurt or harm to a child including but not limited to hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or fabrication/deliberately inducing illness (Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy)

Emotional - persistent emotional maltreatment of a child causing severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, inadequate, or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. Persons may have over or under realistic expectations on a child for their age. It is present when any form of abuse is happening but may occur alone.

Sexual - forcing or enticing a child to take part in or watch sexual activities or acts. This can be penetrative and non-penetrative acts and involve a child partaking or watching.

Neglect – 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. This may be through neglect of basic needs of food, hygiene, clothing, or housing but also failing to protect children from harm/danger including a child's medical or emotional needs.

Domestic abuse - Any type of controlling, coercive, aggressive, or threatening behaviour between two people in a relationship. Those who witness this behaviour are likely to be significantly affected emotionally and personally. As well as the general indicators domestic abuse may be evident from changes in an adult's behaviour.

Specific areas of abuse

Female Genital mutilation (FGM)

A procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed and there is no medical reason for this, but in some countries it is considered a religious act and a cultural requirement. It is a traumatic and violent act leaving both physical and emotional damage. FGM is prevalent in many countries, particularly North African countries, areas of the middle east and Asia. There are several factors in addition to a girl's or woman's community, country of origin and family history that could indicate she is at risk of being subjected to FGM. Potential risk/indicative factors may include:

- female born into a family or community where known FGM has taken place
- a girl confides to a professional that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to 'become a woman'
- a girl or family talks about (or goes on) a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is common
- a family is not engaging with professionals (health, education or other)
- a girl is unexpectedly absent from nursery
- sections are missing from a girl's red book; a girl has attended a travel clinic or equivalent for vaccinations / anti-malarial
- physical signs when changing a child or a child's reluctance to get changed or use the toilet

FGM Helpline 0800 028 3550

There is a statutory duty to report any disclosure or observation (physical evidence that FGM has taken place) to the Police via the 101 number.

Child exploitation

When a child is manipulated or coerced into doing something that benefits another person(s). This may be through eliciting criminal activity (such as drug dealing or theft), sexual exploitation (such as position or gaining of images) or trafficking where a child is removed from their home to work/ be exploited. Additional signs that a child is at risk may be:

- sudden increase in wealth or gifts
- absence from education
- use of new slang words
- no access to a parent or guardian or being unaware of where that person is
- reluctance to share information
- excessive time doing household chores or tasks

Procedures

All staff are aware of the procedures that they must follow when there are any concerns about a child. All staff understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality. Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL or Manager. Information will then be disseminated on a 'need-to-know' basis.

If a child makes a disclosure:

- Allow a child adequate time to talk if they are making a disclosure.
- Only ask open questions and not leading questions i.e. "What happened to your arm?" rather than "Did X bite your arm?"
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell but do not promise to keep it a 'secret' due to needing to share this.
- Ensure that the child is secure to continue playing and has shared all they need to.

If noting a physical concern:

- Ensure that this is handled sensitively and with dignity.

Any of the concerns mentioned above must be Reported to the DSL. This must be done as soon as possible, in a confidential space. Any conversations with parents/carers that cause concern should also be reported to the DSL.

A Safeguarding Concern Form or Safeguarding Record of Conversation form is then completed.

- Provide clear details of the disclosure or concern.
- Record should be fact, not opinion and should record exactly what was said by the child or parent.
- A 'body map' should be used to record physical injuries.
- The DSL will check this form thoroughly.

The DSL will decide the appropriate response based on their specialist knowledge of safeguarding and the individual family. They may contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) team for advice.

- If it is believed that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the DSL will follow the procedures set out by the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership. A detailed referral is made online by submitting a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) form or via the phone to Customer First. A social worker will then respond within 24hours
- The parents will be told that a referral is being made, unless to do so would increase the risk to the child; this is done in consultation with the referral team.

Where possible, concerns will be discussed with the parent/carer for an explanation, providing it does not put the child at immediate risk. Parental agreement will be sought for a referral unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child at risk of significant harm.

Child protection information is stored and handled in line with Data Protection 2018 principles. Information is processed for limited purposes, records are adequate, relevant, accurate, not excessive and kept no longer than necessary. All forms and other written information will be stored in a locked facility.

Contact Telephone Numbers

MASH, professional consultation line: **0345 606 1499**

Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm
Friday 9am to 4.25pm

MASH professional live web chat at <https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/concerned/#gsc.tab=0>

Customer First : **0808 800 4005**

Online MARF at <https://earlyhelpportal.suffolk.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/marf#h>

In the event of a concern for a child's immediate safety we will dial 999

Prevent and risk of radicalisation

The prevent duty is the 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, Section 26). Simply, it is the need to protect those who may be manipulated or affected by extremist ideology whether that is race, religion, or gender. Those who may be at risk may demonstrate some of the general causes for concern above but may also:

- Express extremist ideology
- Be unwilling to interact with those who are different to them
- Refuse to listen to other's point of view
- Distance themselves from others
- Become increasingly argumentative
- Seek to hide their views

The Department for Education has a dedicated helpline number for concerns relating to extremism (020 7340 7264) or by email at counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk

Fundamental British Values

British values are fundamental, shared principles that form the basis of society and identity in the United Kingdom.

They also act as a good guideline for effective personal, social, and emotional development and supporting children to become successful citizens. These are promoted within the Pre-School.

Democracy - Making decisions together. Everyone has equal rights and is treated equally. Each child's view matters, and it's important they are given the opportunity to share and collaborate to make decisions together. Group times and activities support collaboration, turn taking, and sharing. Children contribute to the planning by making requests or demonstrating interests.

Rule of Law - Understanding that rules matter in our society. At an earlier level, it's more about understanding cause and effect and that our actions have consequences. This also ties into distinguishing between right and wrong. We incorporate a short set of simple, consistent rules in the Pre-School and teach children that actions have consequences. We explain to children how something they have done might have made another child feel, instead of just asking them to say a meaningless 'sorry'.

Individual Liberty - Freedom for everyone. Developmentally, we give children a positive sense of themselves and promote their self-confidence and self-awareness. Child-led play allows children to explore their own interests rather than moving them towards a pre-made plan. We acknowledge and celebrate children's favourite things, maybe a book or soft toy which is special to them. We value children's work and ideas through displays.

Mutual Respect and Tolerance - Treat others as they would like to be treated creating an environment where there is tolerance of all faiths, cultures, races, and views, along with an understanding of our differences and similarities. We celebrate cultural events and find ways to bring them into our activities. This helps children to understand and play a part in cultures that they wouldn't necessarily see in their lives outside of the Pre-School. We take children on visits in the wider community.

Allegations against an employee, volunteer, or other adult

The framework for managing allegations is set out in the statutory guidance contained in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023).

It is essential that any allegation of abuse made against a person who works with children and young people including those who work in a voluntary capacity is dealt with fairly, quickly, and consistently, in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer the procedure is as follows:

- The nursery manager or the person in charge must be informed immediately.
- The Chair of the Committee must also be informed within 24 hours.
- The facts from the person making the allegation must be recorded.
- A statement should NOT be taken from the child.
- The person raising the concern or dealing with the incident should NOT take the investigation further or inform the adult in question until speaking with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The LADO is a local authority representative who is responsible for providing advice, information and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations around allegations and concerns regarding workers. The LADO liaise with the police and other agencies and monitor progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with quickly, consistently, and fairly.

The LADO has management and oversight of the investigation process from beginning to end following an allegation against people in a position of trust who work with children.

The LADO must be contacted within one working day if it is alleged that a person has:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to be working with young children

Following advice from the LADO Little Acorns disciplinary procedures will be followed.

Suspension will be considered in any matter where there is cause to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, or the allegation warrants a police investigation. Suspension will also be considered if the allegation is of such a serious nature that the behaviour might be grounds for dismissal. The volunteer or employee involved will be suspended on full pay until the matter is resolved. All concerns and allegations will be treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.

It is also necessary to inform Ofsted about any allegations of abuse or concerns about a child.

Email LADO@suffolk.gov.uk

LADO central telephone number **0300 123 2044**

Further information <https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/local-authority-designated-officers-lado>

Whistle blowing

Whistle blowing is a term that generally applies to acting as a witness to misconduct or malpractice. Any individual who has reasonable suspicion of malpractice by a colleague should inform the manager immediately. If they do not feel this is appropriate they can approach the chair of the committee, Ofsted, or the Local Authority. It is recognised that this can be a daunting and difficult experience for some people. All reports will be investigated and dealt with in confidence, including only those staff on a 'need to know' basis.

Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline **0300 123 3155** (8am-6pm, Monday to Friday)

E-mail whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk

Protect- charity giving free and confidential advice

Protect **020 3117 2520**

Mon, Tue & Thurs 9.30am – 1pm, 2pm -5.30pm

Wed & Fri 9.30am-1pm

Further information <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

It can be contacted anonymously on **0800 028 0285**

E-mail help@NSPCC.org.uk

Further information <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/whistleblowing-advice-line/>

Staff training

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff. As part of the induction process new staff will be booked to do the training as soon as a date is available. Training is renewed every two years. Staff may undergo refresher training within this two-year period if it is felt necessary.

The DSL will ensure that the staff's knowledge, understanding and practice of safeguarding children is kept up to date through regular discussions during staff meetings and supervisions. Where gaps are identified support and training will be given.

The DSL undertakes roles and responsibilities training every two years.

Staff will also undergo safer feeding and choking training.

Safer recruitment

We practice robust recruitment procedures in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with the children.

Applicants will:

- Complete an application form, including their work history
- Provide two referees including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children.
- Provide evidence of identity and qualifications
- Be checked through the Disclosure and Barring service
- All new staff must read and understand the safeguarding policy before commencing work with the children.

It is our expectation that no one will work unsupervised with children until we obtain a valid DBS check for them.

New members of staff undergo an induction which includes familiarisation with the settings safeguarding policy and training requirements and identification of their own safeguarding and training needs. Managers attend regular safer recruitment training.

Behavioural expectations of adults

Whilst caring for other people's children, we are in a position of trust and our responsibilities to them, and the organisation must be always uppermost in practitioners' minds.

We do not:

- use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking, hitting or rough handling
- behave in a way that frightens or demeans a child
- use any racist, sexist, discriminatory or offensive language
- let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon

In some exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to physically restrain a child to prevent personal injury to themselves, personal injury to another child or adult, immediate danger of death to themselves, another child or adult or serious damage to property.

Staff will make the judgment to physically restrain a child only when there is a real or potential danger. The child will only be restrained by holding them until the danger has passed. The child will then be spoken to, preferably in a quiet area. They will be calmed and reassured by the staff. An explanation will be given to the child as to why they were restrained using language appropriate to their understanding. Parent's will be informed as soon as possible of the incident. Any occasions when restraint is used will be recorded by the member of staff responsible for the restraint and include witness's signatures. Physical contact and restraint should be a last resort.

Intimate Care

Children's privacy is considered and balanced with safeguarding and support needs. The normal process of nappy changing should not raise child protection concerns. Staff do not leave themselves vulnerable and will always work in an open environment by avoiding private or unobserved situations or closing doors to the toilets/nappy changing room.

Mobile phones

The setting's mobile phones must only be used by members of staff for work purposes. All digital images will be taken with cameras owned by the provision and all photographs and film taken of the children and families within the provision, and while on visits, remain the property of the provision.

- Staff and volunteers must be diligent in ensuring that photos taken of children do not place themselves or the child at risk, e.g. making sure that the child is appropriately dressed.
- Images included in external publications and documents, such as promotional materials, websites, and social media pages, must never include children's names.
- Images of children should not be stored on personal computers, laptops, or memory sticks without permission from the manager. The provision has the right to monitor the ICT equipment of staff to safeguard children. Photographs stored electronically must not contain other information about the child, to protect their identity.
- Passwords or passcodes for nursery devices must not be shared or written down and will be changed regularly.
- Mobile phones and devices belonging to the setting may be monitored for safeguarding reasons and to ensure policy compliance, this should be undertaken by the Manager or the DSL.
- During outings staff will only use mobile phones belonging to the setting, except in an emergency.
- Parental permission must be obtained on joining the setting for the use of photographs or videos of children.
- Pre-school devices must not be taken home with staff and must remain secure at the setting when not in use. If an employee works from home on a regular basis, company equipment can be taken home, and periodic review of these devices conducted.

Use of personal mobile phones, smart watches, and any other personal devices by staff

- Personal mobile phones are stored safely in the office and not accessed during working hours. They can be used on a designated break, and this must be away from the children.
- During outings personal mobile phones and smart watches should not be used at all whilst with the children.
- Photographs must not be taken of the children on any personal phones or any other personal information storage device. Only Pre-School owned devices can be used to take photographs or videos.

- Staff must not use their personal mobiles and other devices to communicate with parents and carers, unless there is a pre-existing relationship (friend or relative) between the employee and parent. If there is a pre-existing relationship between the employee and a parent or carer, the employee should be respectful and act professionally when communicating, taking responsibility for all communications
- The Pre-School is not responsible for the loss, damage, or theft of any personal mobile or device.
- All members of staff should remain vigilant and report any concerns of misuse of mobile phones to the setting's manager or DSL
- If a member of staff breaches this policy, action will be taken in line with the disciplinary procedures documented in the staff handbook
- If a member of staff is thought to have illegal content on a mobile phone or smart watch or have committed a criminal offence using a personal device or mobile phone, the police will be contacted, and the LADO informed.
- Staff who bring personal phones or devices into the provision must ensure that there is no inappropriate or illegal content on them
- Smart watches that can take pictures or record audio should be on aeroplane mode and not connected to a mobile phone

Parents and visitors

To protect children, parents or visitors are not permitted to use their mobile phones on the premises. Visitors and parents are informed of the policy, and this is reinforced by signs in the setting.

Members of staff should challenge visitors if they have concerns about their use of mobile phones or other devices and inform the manager or DSL of any breaches of policy. Parents or visitors who either arrive using a mobile phone, or take a call on a mobile should be immediately asked to end their phone call or remain outside of the building.

Parents are advised that children cannot bring into the setting any devices that may take photographs or videos, to ensure that everyone is safeguarded and to protect personal property from loss or damage.

Lost Children

Staff must always employ general strategies to keep children safe and secure. All staff members and others working with the children are clear on the protocols required if a child was to become lost. The safety of the children is paramount, and the setting will make every effort to ensure that whilst on outings or at the setting all children are closely supervised to ensure they remain safe and within the group.

Whilst at the setting we ensure the following:

- Registers are kept
- Regular headcounts are done after any transitions
- Adhere to required adult to child ratios
- Daily risk assessments to check the premises is safe and secure.

Whilst on outings we make sure:

- We have a higher adult to child ratio
- Risk assessments before and during outings
- Regular headcounts

In the extremely unlikely event that a child was to become detached from the group and become lost then we have the following procedures in place:

- All staff and helpers to be alerted and a search made of the immediate and surrounding areas
- Depending on location, others alerted, for example if in a shop then the shop staff
- If the search proves negative then parents, police and Ofsted are to be informed.
- Staff must ensure the welfare, both physical and emotional, of other children in their care
- Person in charge to provide the police with details of the child and incident
- Person in charge is responsible for gathering all relevant information and liaising with the required authorities and parents. Parents are kindly requested to inform the person in charge if there is any risk of abduction from an estranged parent. Staff are unable to prevent a parent taking their own child unless they have been given copies of any legal injunction preventing the parent having access.

Uncollected Children

Late Collection with Prior Notice

Practitioners must ensure that the approximate time of arrival to the setting is stated by the parents/carer whilst being informed. If you are concerned about the time delay suggest to the parent that alternative arrangements are made to collect the child.

Late collection without prior notice

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

- We will check for any information about changes to the normal collection routines
- If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or at work.
- If this is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents/carers to collect their child from the setting and alternative emergency contacts are contacted by using the telephone numbers and information recorded on the registration form
- Under no circumstances will the child leave the setting with any adult other than those named on the registration form or with prior consent from the parent/carer.
- The child/ren will stay within the setting with two nursery practitioners until the child is safely collected by the parent/ carer or a social worker.
- Social Care Services will aim to find the parent or relative if they are unable to do so, the child will be admitted into the care of the Local Authority.
- Under no circumstances should staff go to look for the parent or take the child home with them.

Non-attendance

If a child is absent from the Pre-School for prolonged periods of time or without notification from a parent or carer we will attempt to contact the child's parents/carers and any alternative emergency contacts.

If a child has a prolonged absence and we are unable to find out the reason why we would consult with the MASH Professional consultation line.

If we are concerned about the immediate welfare of a child we would contact Customer First.

E-Safety

We aim to ensure children are safeguarded and protected from potential harm online. E-safety is embedded across the pre-school. The risks recognised include:

- prolonged exposure to online technologies, particularly from an early age
- exposure to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content
- grooming
- cyberbullying
- making, taking and distribution of illegal images and "sexting"
- physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- identity theft
- privacy issues
- addiction to gaming or gambling
- pressure from the media and targeted advertising
- theft and fraud from activities such as phishing
- viruses, malware, etc

Strategies to reduce the risks:

- Check apps, websites, and search results before using them with children to ensure they are age appropriate
- Always supervise children when accessing the internet and use a reputable and familiar internet search engine
- Ensure safety modes and filters are applied as default settings tend not to ensure a high level of privacy or security
- Technology is only used in a way that enhances learning

Social media

Staff are asked to manage their online reputation and relationships.

- Staff should not add parents of children at the setting as friends online, this can blur professional relationships and put staff at risk of allegations. Any pre-existing relationships should be discussed with the DSL and/or Manager
- Employees must not identify themselves as an employee of Little Acorns Pre-school or state that they work with children

- Employees must be mindful of the information they share on social media regarding their own state of mind or health as this could be seen to be detrimental to the care that is provided to the children at the pre-school
- The pre-school (including colleagues, children, parents, or the organisation) must not be discussed on social media in any way including in private messages
- Employees must be mindful of information and images they share including political views, racial or sexual comments, offensive language, and other sensitive issues
- Employees must not place inappropriate images of themselves or other staff members on social media
- Employees must not place any images of children at the pre-school on social media

If there are concerns about something seen on social media, such as comments posted by a parent, make sure this is reported to the DSL. If you are concerned about content posted by a colleague, follow the allegations procedure in this policy. Company hardware and devices should not be left in unsecure locations or be used by others.

Any breach of this policy for example incidents on social media of bullying of colleagues, damage to the setting, employees, children, or families will be investigated and could result in misconduct or gross misconduct.

Volunteers/placements/work experience must not:

- State on social media where they are volunteering or on a placement
- Discuss the pre-school in any way on social media, including the organisation, location, policies and practice, children, staff, and parents. This continues to apply after placements have finished
- Enter any discussions on social media about the Pre-School
- Attempt to establish relationships with parents/carers on social media during or beyond your placement
- Not take photographs of the Pre-School children on personal phones.

Parents and carers should:

- Be cautious how they discuss the Pre-school in conversations on social media, noting the location of the Pre-School, the names of any staff or volunteers, the names of other children and their parents/carers
- Any concerns or negative opinions about how the Pre-School is run should not be discussed on social media. These should be reported to the Manager so that they can be investigated, discussed, and resolved formally. If opinions are discussed that result in having a detrimental effect on the Pre-School, its employees, children, or parents, the Pre-School will follow formal proceedings to investigate.
- Social Media friendships with staff /volunteers should not be created. This is so that correct professional relationships are maintained between staff and parents. An exception to this rule is if a parent has an existing relationship with an employee/volunteer before their child starts at the Pre-School.
- The rule no longer applies once the child has left the Pre-School.
- Photographs taken at any events are for personal use only and should not be uploaded on to social media.

The use of our Facebook page is for announcements, providing useful information, encouraging support of fundraising activities and sharing what we have been doing with the children. Only committee, managers and designated staff can place posts. Photographs of children will not be posted without prior consent from parents/carers. Photographs of volunteers or work experience placements should not be posted. Any negative comments or discussions about the Pre-School or its staff will be removed and the individual posting them will be contacted directly.

Related strategies and policies which we adhere to:

- *The Children's Act (2004)*
- *The protection of children Act (1999)*
- *Every Child Matters (2004)*
- *Working together to safeguard children (2023)*
- *Common Assessment Framework (2009)*
- *The Suffolk Safeguarding partnership*
- *Data Protection Act (2018)*

Secondary legislation:

- *Sexual Offences Act (2003)*
- *Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2010)*
- *Human Rights Act (1998)*
- *Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015)*
- *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act*
- *Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003)*

Policy reviewed on: 7th April 2025

Reviewed by: Sandra Butler, Manager

Next Review Due: 7th April 2026