



## **Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy**

Date of creation: January 2019

Next Review Date: January 2021 - Reviewed by Directors 18/01/2021

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Willow Banks Forest School aims to keep all children safe.

We work within the procedures and recommendations of the Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding Children Board:

<http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/>

### **This Child Protection Policy consists of three main documents:**

- the safeguarding policy;
- detailed child protection procedures;
- a separate child protection summary sheet.

The latter is printed separately and provided routinely for those adults who will have unsupervised contact, even as a 'one-off', with pupils on a temporary or intermittent basis such as supply, peripatetic or visiting professionals.

### **A. Safeguarding Policy**

Willow Banks Forest School believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility at the forest school.

### **Legal Framework**

**This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:**

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

**We recognise that:**

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The Directors of Sherborne Equestrian Ltd are accountable for ensuring that the forest school meets its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and that all policies and procedures are in place and effective.

The directors will receive an annual report from the Designated Safeguarding Lead and nominated staff members in order to help monitor compliance with statutory responsibilities and to review and update the policy. Directors of the charity, staff and regular volunteers in this school understand the importance of working in partnership with children, their parents/carers and other agencies in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- afford protection for all young people;
- enable staff and volunteers to safeguard and promote the welfare of the young people;
- promote a culture which makes the forest school a safe place to learn and in which children feel safe.

This policy applies to the forest school manager, all staff (including supply and peripatetic staff), regular volunteers, directors or anyone working on behalf of the forest school.

**We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- involving them in decisions which affect them;
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- never tolerating bullying, homophobic behaviour, racism, sexism or any other forms of discrimination;
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.:

## **B. Child Protection Procedures**

### **1. What is Child Protection?**

Child protection is one very important aspect of safeguarding. It refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

### **2. What is significant harm?**

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention by statutory agencies in family life in the best interests of children. There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Sometimes it might be a single traumatic event but more often it is a compilation of significant events which damage the child's physical and psychological development. Decisions about significant harm are complex and in each case require discussion with the statutory agencies: Children's Social Care and Police.

### **3. Purpose of these procedures**

These procedures explain what action should be taken if there are concerns that a child is or might be suffering harm. A 'child' is a person under 18 years but the principles of these procedures apply also to vulnerable young adults over 18 years.

### **4. Responsibilities and roles**

All adults in the forest school have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by taking appropriate action. This includes taking action where there are child protection concerns. The Directors of the charity are accountable for ensuring the school has an effective child protection policy which should be reviewed annually and available publicly. It is the role of the directors to work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and to provide a link between the forest school and the charity to monitor whether mandatory policies, procedures and training are in place and effective.

The forest school has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

This is the person with whom concerns about children should be discussed and reported.

The school also has a Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead in this school is Victoria Predeth

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead is Melanie Ricketts .

### **5. Operation Encompass Safeguarding Statement**

Our school is part of Operation Encompass. This is a police and education early intervention safeguarding partnership which supports children and young people who experience Domestic Abuse.

Operation Encompass means that the police will share information about Domestic Abuse incidents with our school PRIOR to the start of the next school day when they have been called to a domestic incident.

Once a Key Adult (DSL) has attended an Operation Encompass briefing they will cascade the principles of Operation Encompass to all DDSL's.

Our parents are fully aware that we are an Operation Encompass school.

The Operation Encompass information is stored in line with all other confidential safeguarding and child protection information.

The Key Adult has also led training for all school staff and Governors about Operation Encompass, the prevalence of Domestic Abuse and the impact of this abuse on children. We have also discussed how we can support our children following the Operation Encompass notification.

We are aware that we must do nothing that puts the child/ren or the non abusing adult at risk.

The Safeguarding Governor will report on Operation Encompass in the termly report to Directors. All information is anonymised for these reports.

The Key Adult has used the Operation Encompass Toolkit to ensure that all appropriate actions have been taken by the school.

The Operation Encompass Key Adults are:

DSL - Victoria Predeth

Deputy DSL - Melanie Ricketts

## **6. What is child abuse?**

### **i) Abuse:**

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

### **ii) Physical abuse**

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

### **iii) Emotional abuse**

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their

views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

#### **iv) Sexual abuse**

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

#### **v) Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance use. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. It is accepted that in all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse, and that some children are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any one time. (Keeping children safe in education Sept 2016)

### **7. Recognising child abuse – signs and symptoms**

Recognising child abuse is not always easy, and it is not the responsibility of forest school staff to decide whether or not child abuse has definitely taken place or if a child is at significant risk. They do, however, have a clear responsibility to act if they have a concern about a child's welfare or safety or if a child talks about (discloses) abuse. They should maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

## **8. Under-age sexual activity**

Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of consenting partners of a similar age is not usual. DSLs will exercise professional judgement when deciding whether to refer to social workers. However, where a child is under the age of 13 penetrative sex is classified as rape under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 so must be reported to social workers in every case. The inter-agency safeguarding procedures, on the DSCB website, have more information about under-age sexual activity.

## **9. Peer on Peer abuse and allegations made by children about other children**

9.1 Peer on peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyberbullying), gender based violence/sexual assaults and sexting. Staff should be clear as to the forest school's policy and procedures with regards to peer on peer abuse. On occasions children may be harmed by other pupils, including sexting. The nature of the allegation or concern will determine whether forest school staff should implement anti-bullying procedures or whether a referral needs to be made to social workers or Safer School Community Team, or alternative agencies.

9.2 These child protection procedures will be followed if a child or young person displays sexually harmful behaviour. This involves one or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. It is also considered harmful if it involves coercion or threats of violence or one of the children is much older than the other.

9.3 The process for managing sexually harmful behaviour can be found in the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the DSCB website. In brief, a multiagency meeting should be convened by Family Support (Social Care) following the referral and an action plan agreed.

9.4 A risk assessment will be put in place, preferably by way of a meeting, which includes parents/carers and other professionals where they are involved. On occasion, children may be harmed by other pupils. The nature of the allegation or concern will determine whether staff should implement the school's anti-bullying procedures or whether a referral needs to be made to social workers and/or referred to the Safer Schools Community Team.

## **10. Child sexual exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. A significant number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation go missing

from home, care and education at some point. Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual exploitation:

- Children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- Children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late;
- Children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Any concerns about child sexual exploitation will be discussed with the DSL. There is more detailed information and a 'risk matrix' in the inter-agency Safeguarding procedures on the DSCB website.

## **11. Forms of abuse linked to culture, faith or belief**

Female Genital Mutilation is illegal and involves intentionally altering or injuring female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It can have serious implications for physical health and emotional well-being. Possible indicators include taking the girl out of school / country for a prolonged period or talk of a 'special procedure' or celebration.

Forced Marriage is also illegal and occurs where one or both people do not or, in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is not the same as arranged marriage. Young people at risk of forced marriage might have their freedom unreasonably restricted or being 'monitored' by siblings. There might be a request for extended absence from school or might not return from a holiday abroad.

So called 'honour-based' violence is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. It can exist in all communities and cultures and occurs when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Females are predominantly, but not exclusively, the victims and the violence is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family or community members.

It is important that staff at forest school are aware of all above forms of abuse and report concerns to the DSL who will seek further advice from statutory agencies.

Anti-radicalisation and extremism Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. Extremism is defined by HM Government as 'Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and/or calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas'. In forest school we recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation and extremism is no different from safeguarding against any other vulnerability.

Any concerns about pupils becoming radicalised or being drawn into extremism will be reported to the DSL who will not speak to parents/carers or other family members at this stage but will take prompt advice from the Police by e-mailing the Safeguarding Referral Unit: [sru@dorset.pnn.police.uk](mailto:sru@dorset.pnn.police.uk)

## **Responding to the child who discloses (talks about) abuse**

All staff and volunteers will:

- listen carefully to what is said;
- avoid showing shock or disbelief;
- observe the child's demeanour;
- find an appropriate opportunity to explain that the information will need to be shared with others. They will not promise to keep the information confidential or a 'secret';
- allow the child to continue at her/his own pace and do not interrupt if the child is freely recalling events. They will not stop him/her in order to find a 'witness' as this could inhibit the child from saying more;
- avoid asking questions or pressing for more information. Ask for clarification only. If questions are necessary they should be framed an open manner and not 'lead' the child in any way. Remember TED: Tell me.... Explain.... Describe...
- reassure the child, if necessary, that s/he has done the right thing in telling;
- explain what will happen next and with whom the information will be shared;
- not ask the child to repeat the disclosure to anyone else in forest school – including the DSL - or ask him/her or any other children who were present to write a written account or 'statement'.

## **12. Taking action**

Where physical injuries have been observed, these will be carefully noted but not photographed. The staff member will not ask to see injuries that are said to be on an intimate part of the child's body.

Any disclosure or indicators of abuse will be reported verbally to the DSL or Deputy as soon as possible or, where this is not possible and concerns are immediate, ensure a referral is made without delay to the Family Support (Social Care) team which covers the area in which the child and family live, we will then contact the feeder school's DSL to inform.

Where there is no disclosure by a child but concerns are accumulating, such as in relation to neglect or emotional abuse, the DSL will ensure that all information is brought together and that s/he makes a professional judgement about whether to refer to outside agencies.

## **13. Responding to concerns reported by parents or others in the community**

Occasionally parents or other people in the local community tell school staff about an incident in or accumulation of concerns they have about the family life of a child who is also a pupil at the forest school. If the incident or concern relates to child protection, the information cannot be ignored, even if there are suspicions about the motives for making the report. Members of staff will therefore pass the information to the DSL in the usual way.

It is preferable if the parent/community member who witnessed or knows about the concerns or incident makes a call to Family Support (Social Care) themselves as they will be better able to answer any questions. They can ask for their name not to be divulged if a visit is made to the family. The DSL will advise accordingly and later confirm that this referral has been made.

If the parent / community member refuses to make the referral, the DSL will clarify that s/he has a responsibility to do so and will also need to pass on to social workers how s/he is aware of the information. This process also applies to parents / community members who are also school staff. As professionals who work with children they cannot be anonymous when making the referral but can ask for the situation to be managed sensitively and, if necessary, for their identity to be withheld from the family if it will cause difficulties in their private life.

#### **14. Remember**

Any suspicion or concern that a child or young person may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, **MUST** be acted on. Doing nothing is not an option. Any suspicion or concerns will be reported without delay to the DSL or Deputy.

If they are not available the staff member will discuss their concerns as soon as possible with either

- another senior member of staff or
- the duty worker in the Family Support (Social Care) Team responsible for the area where the child lives

Anyone can make a referral to Social Care, not just the DSLs.

It is important that everyone in the school is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for making a judgement about whether or not abuse has occurred and should not conduct an 'investigation' to establish whether the child is telling the truth. That is a task for social workers and the Police following a referral to them of concern about a child. The role of forest school staff is to act promptly on the information received.

This applies regardless of the alleged 'perpetrator': whether the child talks about a family member or someone outside school, a member of staff or another child/pupil.

A careful record will be made of what has been seen/heard that has led to the concerns and the date, time, location and people who were present. As far as possible, staff should record

verbatim what was said and by whom. The DSL will keep a record of the conversation with the duty worker and other social workers, noting what actions will be taken and by whom, giving the date and time of the referral

### **15. Response from Children's Services Family Support (Social Care) to a school referral**

- Referral

Once a referral is received by the relevant team, a manager will decide on the next course of action within one working day. When there is concern that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, this will be decided more quickly and a strategy discussion held with the Police and Health professionals (section 47 Children Act 1989). The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be told within three working days of the outcome of the referral. If this does not happen s/he will contact the duty worker again.

### **16. Responding to allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers**

Rigorous recruitment and selection procedures and adhering to the forest school's code of conduct and safer practice guidance will hopefully mean that there are relatively few allegations against or concerns about staff or volunteers.

However, if a member of staff has any reason to believe that another adult has acted inappropriately or abused a child or young person, they will take action by reporting to the Forest School Manager. Even though it may seem difficult to believe that a colleague may be unsuitable to work with children, the risk is far too serious for any member of staff to dismiss such a suspicion without taking action.

If the allegation/concern is about the Manager, it will be discussed with the Directors of the charity. In all cases of allegations against staff or volunteers, the Forest School Manager and Directors of the charity, must follow the correct procedure.

### **17. Children who are disabled**

Research shows that children who are disabled are especially vulnerable to abuse and adults who work with them need to take extra care when interpreting apparent signs of abuse or neglect. These child protection procedures will be followed if a child who is disabled discloses abuse or there are indicators of abuse or neglect. There are no different or separate procedures for children who are disabled.

Staff responsible for intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times and in accordance with the forest school's intimate care policy.

## **18. Safer Working Practice**

All adults who come into contact with children at the forest school will behave at all times in a professional manner which secures the best outcomes for children and also prevents allegations being made.

Advice on safer working practice can be found in the school's Code of Conduct.

## **19. Training**

Child protection will be part of induction for all staff and volunteers new to the forest school; they will also be given a copy of the Code of Conduct and details about the DSLs.

This will be followed up by basic child protection training that equips individuals to recognise and respond appropriately to concerns about pupils. The depth and detail of the training will vary according to the nature of the role and the extent of involvement with children.

Staff who have designated responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including the Manager and DSL's, will undertake suitable refresher training at appropriate intervals. This is recommended at least every two years.

## **20. Raising concerns about safeguarding practice in our forest school**

In the forest school we promote a culture where any staff or volunteers feel able to raise with the manager any concerns about safeguarding or child protection practice. Any issues which they have not been able to resolve with the manager should be reported to the Directors in the first instance. If they are still not satisfied they should approach the Director for Children's Services

## **21. Information for parents and carers**

At the forest school we are committed to keeping young people safe.

Our first priority is your child's welfare and we will usually discuss with you any concerns we have about your child. There might be rare occasions, however, when we have to provide information to or consult other agencies such as Children's Services Social Care before we contact you. This will include situations where we judge that to tell you first will or might put your child at risk of significant harm.

Our responsibilities are set out in this policy.

If you have any questions about this please speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:  
Victoria Predeth

## C. Child Protection Summary for all Temporary Staff



This part is printed separately and provided routinely for those adults who will have unsupervised contact, even as a 'one-off', with pupils on a temporary or intermittent basis.

### Child Protection Policy

Review Date: January 2022

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Willow Banks Forest School aims to keep all children safe.

We work within the procedures and recommendations of the Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding Children Board:

<http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/>

Willow Banks Forest School

As an adult working in the forest school you have a duty of care towards all young people. This means you must act at all times in a way that is consistent with their safety and welfare.

You must follow the principles of safer working practice, which includes use of technology – on no account should you take images of pupils on personal equipment, including your mobile 'phone.

If the behaviour of another adult in the school gives rise to concern you must report it to the Forest School Manager.

If you have a concern about a child, particularly if you think s/he may be suffering or at risk of suffering harm, it is your responsibility to share the information promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy who are Victoria Predeth and Diane Breden.

The following is not an exhaustive list but you might become concerned as a result of:

- seeing a physical injury which you believe to be non-accidental;
- observing something in the appearance of a child which leads you to think his/her needs are being neglected; or
- a child telling you that she/he has been subjected to some form of abuse In any of these circumstances you must write down what you observed or heard, date and sign the account and give it to the DSL or Deputy. If a child talks to you about (discloses) sexual or physical abuse you:

- listen carefully without interruption, particularly if s/he is freely recalling significant events;
- only ask sufficient questions to clarify what you have heard. You might not need to ask anything but, if you do, you must not 'lead' the pupil in any way so should only ask 'open' questions;
- make it clear you are obliged to pass the information on, but only to those who need to know;
- tell the DSL or Deputy without delay; and
- write an account of the disclosure as soon as you are able (definitely the same day), date and sign it and give it to the DSL. Do not ask the pupil to repeat the disclosure to anyone else at forest school, ask him/her or any other child to write a 'statement', or inform parents. You are not expected to make a judgement about whether the child is telling the truth.

**Remember – share any concerns, don't keep them to yourself.**

### **Useful Contacts**

#### 1) Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Single point of contact for safeguarding concerns.

Dorset County Council - MASH@dorsetcc.gov.uk - 01202 228866

#### 2) Dorset Children's Services Family Support Teams (incorporating Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Services)

When making new referrals ask for the Child Care Duty Officer for the area in which the pupil lives:

- Bridport 01308 422234
- Christchurch 01202 474106
- Dorchester 01305 221450
- Ferndown 01202 877445
- Purbeck 01929 553456
- Sturminster Newton 01258 472652
- Weymouth & Portland 01305 760139

#### 3) Out of Hours Service

- 01202 657279

#### 4) Dorset Safeguarding and Standards Team

- 01305 221122

The team comprises Children's Services managers and advisors including:

- The Education Safeguarding Standards Advisor who offers advice and support to Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads in relation to safeguarding and child protection issues
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to whom allegations against adults who work with children in education establishments must be reported.

#### 5) Dorset Virtual School for children who are in care/ Looked After

- 01305 228309

## **Possible Indicators of Abuse**

The following information is not designed to turn forest school staff into experts but it will help them to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse.

The examples below are not meant to form an exhaustive list; Designated Safeguarding Leads and other staff will find it helpful to refer to the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board website for more detailed information.

### **i) Physical Abuse**

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily lives. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of the body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children, however, will have bruising which is less likely to have been caused accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or there are differing explanations.

A delay in seeking medical treatment for a child when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different ethnic groups and specialist advice may need to be taken.

Patterns of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse can include:

- bruising in children who are not independently mobile
- bruises that are seen away from bony prominences
- bruises to the face, back, stomach, arms, buttocks, ears and hands
- multiple bruises in clusters
- multiple bruises of uniform shape
- bruises that carry the imprint of an implement used, hand marks, fingertips or a belt buckle

Although bruising is the commonest injury in physical abuse, fatal non-accidental head injury and non-accidental fractures can occur without bruising. Any child who has unexplained signs of pain or illness must be seen promptly by a doctor. Other physical signs of abuse can include:

- cigarette burns
- adult bite marks
- broken bones
- scalds

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- flinching when approached or touched
- reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- missing school
- running away from home

## **ii) Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear otherwise well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Children who live in households where there is domestic violence often suffer emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix/play with other children.

The physical signs of emotional abuse can include:

- a failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, e.g. in hospital or away from parents' care
- sudden speech disorders
- developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- neurotic behaviour, e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- being unable to play
- fear of making mistakes
- self harm
- fear of parents being approached

## **iii) Sexual Abuse**

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause concern, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to, taken seriously and appropriate action taken promptly.

The physical signs of sexual abuse can include:

- pain or itching in the genital/anal areas
- bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- sexually transmitted disease
- vaginal discharge or infection
- stomach pains
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse can include:

- sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- having nightmares
- missing school
- running away from home
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level

- sexual drawings or language
- bedwetting
- eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- alcohol / substance / drug use
- suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults or other children

#### **iv) Neglect**

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children and young people.

The physical signs of neglect can include:

- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- being constantly dirty or smelly
- loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect can include:

- complaining of being tired all the time
- not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- having few friends
- mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

It is important that adults at forest school recognise that providing compensatory care might address the immediate and presenting issue but could cover up or inhibit the recognition of neglect in all aspects of a child's life.

Compensatory care is defined as 'providing a child or young person, on a regular basis, help or assistance with basic needs with the aim of redressing deficits in parental care'. This might involve, for example, providing each day a substitute set of clothing because those from home are dirty, or showering a child whose personal hygiene or presentation is such that it is affecting his/her interaction with peers.

It does not include isolated or irregular support such as giving lunch money or washing a child who has had an 'accident'.

If any adult in forest school finds she/he is regularly attending to one or more aspects of a child's basic needs then this will prompt a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The general rule is: the younger the child, the higher the risk in terms of their immediate health.

However, serious neglect of older children and adolescents is often overlooked, on the assumption that they have the ability to care for themselves and have made a 'choice' to neglect themselves. Lack of engagement with services should be seen as a potential

indicator of neglect. School staff should be mindful of the above and discuss any concerns with the DSL who will take the appropriate action.

#### **iv) Record Keeping:**

##### **Best Practice**

#### **1. Introduction**

The importance of good, clear child welfare and child protection record keeping has been highlighted repeatedly in national and local Serious Case Reviews. It is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)'s responsibility to ensure that child protection files, access, storage and transfer meet the required professional standards as detailed in this document.

The common law of confidentiality, Data Protection and Human Rights principles must be adhered to when obtaining, processing or sharing personal or sensitive information or records. In summary, the Data Protection Act requires that records should be securely kept, accurate, relevant, and up to date and kept for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which they were made.

#### **2. Record to be made by an adult receiving a disclosure of abuse (when a child talks about abuse)**

This record should be made as soon as possible after the individual hearing the disclosure has reported it verbally to the DSL. The facts, not opinions (unless of particular relevance), should be accurately recorded in a non-judgemental way. It is important to remember that expressing an opinion as to whether the child is telling the truth is not helpful and can prejudice how a case proceeds.

The record should ideally be on a standard 'concerns' form but if this is not used, should include:

The child's name, gender and date of birth

Date and time of the conversation

What was the context and who was present during the disclosure?

What did the child say? – verbatim if possible

What questions were asked? – verbatim

Responses to questions –verbatim

Any observations concerning child's demeanour and any injuries

The name of the person to whom the disclosure was reported

Printed name and job title of the author, followed by signature and date.

The record about a disclosure of abuse should be passed to the DSL and retained in the child protection file in its original and contemporaneous form (as it could be used as evidence in court proceedings), even if later typed, shared with the feeder school or if the information is incorporated into a report. Schools should never ask pupils, regardless of their involvement in a child protection matter (ie the subject of an allegation, a witness or the

alleged 'perpetrator'), to write out their 'statements' of what has happened. In some cases this could have the unintended consequence of jeopardising a child protection investigation. This applies regardless of whether the incident(s) took place within or outside school.

### **3. Records kept by the Designated Safeguarding Lead**

As stated at 2.2 above it is useful and recommended practice for forest school staff to have one standard pro forma for recording all 'welfare' and child protection concerns. The concern form should be passed to the DSL who will make a judgement about what action needs to be taken, in accordance with local inter-agency safeguarding procedures. The decision about any action, whether or not a referral is made to Social Care, will be recorded clearly by the DSL.

Concerns which initially seem trivial may turn out to be vital pieces of information later, so it is important to give as much detail as possible. A concern raised may not progress further than a conversation by the DSL with the parent, or, at the other end of the scale, could lead to matters being heard in a court. All 'lower level' concerns about a child's welfare, which will generally have been discussed with parents/carers, are kept in the child protection main file.

These records should not be labelled 'child protection'.

It is never good practice to keep pupil welfare records in a diary or day-book system. Often it is only when a number of seemingly minor issues relating to an individual pupil over a period of time are seen as a whole that a pattern can be identified indicating a child protection concern.

### **4. The format of child protection files**

It is helpful if each child's individual section in the file has a front sheet with key information about the pupil and contact details of parents/carers, feeder school with name of DSL, social worker and any other relevant professionals. If a pupil is or was subject of a child protection plan or in care/looked after, this should be highlighted in some way to make it immediately obvious to anyone accessing the record.

It is a multi-agency standard that children's child protection files must have at the front an up to date chronology of significant incidents or events and subsequent actions/outcomes. Maintaining the chronology is an important part of the DSL role; it aids the DSL, Deputy and others to see the central issues 'at a glance' and helps to identify patterns of events and behaviours. It should make sense as a 'standalone' document: anyone else reading the chronology should be able to follow easily what the concerns are/have been, whether the concerns have escalated and why plus the actions taken by the school to support and protect the child.

Once a chronology is started it should be updated as appropriate even if Social Care later cease involvement. The file should be well organised and include, as appropriate, school 'concern forms', copies of correspondence, reports to the feeder school DSL..

## **7. Storage**

All records relating to child protection concerns are sensitive and confidential so will be kept in a secure (ie locked at all times) filing cabinet, separate from other school files, and accessible only through the DSL and the Deputy.