

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.



## 1.2 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

### Policy statement

At COG we work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children, young people\* and vulnerable adults.

### Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments of the Pre-School Learning Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy, which incorporates responding to child protection concerns.

#### *Key commitment 1*

We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

- We currently have three Designated Safeguarding Leads who, together, co-ordinate child, young person and vulnerable adult protection issues. They are: **Catharine Fowler**, Centre Manager, **Victoria Chase**, Outreach Team Lead and **Sharon Pitts** Pre-School Manager (pending).

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  - When the setting is open at least one designated person will be onsite or, when this is not possible, be available at all times. Should such a situation arise, at least one DSL is available by phone at all times, in line with the requirements of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP). The mobile phone numbers of all 3 DSLs are available in the office. Any member of staff is welcome to use these to discuss safeguarding concerns that arise, with a DSL.

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- The Designated Safeguarding Leads ensure they have relevant links with statutory and voluntary organisations with regard to safeguarding.
- The Designated Safeguarding Leads understand the GSCP safeguarding procedures and attend **relevant Safeguarding Partners training at least every two years**. We ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues and are alert to potential indicators and signs of abuse and neglect.
- All staff understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding concerns are reported to the local authority children's social care team, following correct and up-to-date procedures.

- We discuss safeguarding updates, such as changes in policy or restructuring of local support agencies (eg. Families First) as a team regularly so that current procedures are embedded in our daily work.
- Following GSCP advice we refer to LIVE updates on GSCP and Govt. websites only so that we only use current and up-to-date information and advice.
- All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any safeguarding concerns and know not to just take things at face value but can be respectfully sceptical.
- Through training, all staff understand the principles of early help (as defined in the *Working Together to Safeguard Children*) and are able to identify those children and families who may be in need of early help and enable them to access it.
- All staff understand GSCP Partners thresholds of significant harm and understand how to access services for families, including for those families who are below the threshold for significant harm (see *Levels of Intervention guidance on the office noticeboard*).
- All staff understand how to escalate their concerns in the event that they feel either the local authority and/or their own organisation has not acted adequately to safeguard (see *guidance on the office noticeboard*).
- All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and the circumstances under which they may share information about you and your child with other agencies.
- All staff understand what the organisation expects of them in terms of their required behaviour and conduct, and follow our policies and procedures on positive behaviour, online safety (including use of mobile phones), whistleblowing and dignity at work.
- Children have a key person to build a relationship with, and are supported to articulate any worries, concerns or complaints that they may have in an age appropriate way.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing resources are provided to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks and other suitability checks are carried out for staff and volunteers prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks are carried out on anyone living or working on the premises.
- Volunteers in our pre-school sessions must:
  - be aged 17 or over (unless work experience);
  - be considered competent and responsible;
  - receive a robust induction and regular supervisory meetings;
  - be familiar with all the settings policies and procedures;
  - be fully checked for suitability if they are to have unsupervised access to the children at any time, although this would be very unusual.

- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
  - the criminal records disclosure reference number;
  - the date the disclosure was obtained; and
  - details of who obtained it.
- All staff and volunteers are informed that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders or reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment with us).
- All staff and volunteers are required to notify us if anyone in their household (including family members, lodgers, partners etc.) has any relevant convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands or warnings or has been barred from, or had registration refused or cancelled in relation to any childcare provision or have had orders made in relation to care of their children.
- We notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern.
- Procedures are in place to record the details of visitors to the setting.
- Security steps are taken to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Steps are taken to ensure children are not photographed or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child.
- Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- The DSLs along with the Data Protection Lead have responsibility for ensuring that there is an adequate [online safety policy](#) in place.
- We keep a written record of all complaints and concerns including details of how they were responded to.
- **We ensure that robust risk assessments are completed, that they are seen and signed by all relevant staff and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, in line with our [health and safety policy](#).**
- **Staff will inform a DSL at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern by completing an Expression of Concern Form, however this should not delay any referrals being made to children's social care, the LADO, Ofsted or Riddor.**

### *Key commitment 2*

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents, allegations or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (HMG, 2015).

### *Responding to suspicions of abuse*

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- We ensure that all staff have an understanding of the additional vulnerabilities that arise from special educational needs and/or disabilities, plus inequalities of race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation or culture, and that these receive full consideration in relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through:
  - significant changes in their behaviour;
  - deterioration in their general well-being;
  - their comments which may give cause for concern, or the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure);
  - changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play;
  - unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; and
  - any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
- We are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and parent's learning disability.
- We are aware that children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered and when we know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we inform our local authority children's social care team.
- We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision, such as abuse of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation or extremism.
- In relation to radicalisation and extremism, we follow the Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales published by the Home Office and GSCP procedures on responding to radicalisation.
- All staff in contact with children and their families complete online Prevent training to ensure they are familiar with the local protocol and procedures for responding to concerns about radicalisation.
- We are aware of the mandatory duty that applies to teachers and health workers to report cases of Female Genital Mutilation **to the police**.
- We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-19 as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be taken into account, but the setting may override the young person's refusal to consent to share information if it feels that it is necessary to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been, or to prevent harm to a child or adult. Sharing

confidential information without consent is done only where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.

- All staff are also aware that adults can also be vulnerable and know how to refer adults who are in need of community care services.
- We have a whistleblowing policy in place. If any member of staff feels unable to raise concerns internally if they are unhappy with the way a safeguarding concern is being handled by COG they can visit the NSPCC website for up-to-date email/tel. number to call. This information is also given in the KCSIE document which it is mandatory for all staff to read and a copy of which is always available.
- Staff/volunteers know they can contact the organisation Public Concern at Work for advice relating to whistleblowing. Information and advice is available at <http://www.pcaw.org.uk/>.

#### *Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures*

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour; deterioration in general well-being; unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; that member of staff:
  - listens to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action;
  - takes care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to the child or by asking questions, although it is OK to ask questions for the purposes of clarification;
  - makes a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes: the date and time of the observation or the disclosure; the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible; the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time.
- These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file, which is kept securely and confidentially.
- At least one of our DSLs is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and within one working day.
- Where the GSCP stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by them.

#### *Making a referral to the local authority children's social care team*

- Where we believe that a child in our care may be affected by any factors of abuse we follow the procedures for reporting child protection concerns as set out by the GSCP partners. These procedures can be found on the safeguarding noticeboard in the office and also on the GSCP website: [Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership \(GSCP\) - Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the DSLs. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- In the event that a staff member or volunteer is unhappy with the decision made by the DSLs, in relation to whether to make a safeguarding referral, they must follow escalation procedures.
- We refer concerns to the local authority children's social care team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. NB In some cases this may mean the police or another agency identified by the GSCP.

### *Escalation process*

- If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will follow the GSCP escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns. Information regarding this is on our Safeguarding noticeboard in the office.

### *Informing parents*

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child at risk, or interfere with the course of a police investigation. Advice will be sought from social care if necessary.
- Parents are informed when we make a record of concerns in their child's file and that we also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding a concern.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to social care, parents are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the guidance of the GSCP does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk of significant harm.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser.
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk (or interfere with a police response) the DSL should seek advice from children's social care, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.
- Any discussion with parents relating to safeguarding concerns will be documented the same day on a Record of Discussion form and kept in the child's personal file.

### *Liaison with other agencies*

- We work within the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive partners guidelines.
- The current version of the non-statutory 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' is available online for staff and all staff are familiar with what they need to do if they have concerns through regular training.
- We notify Ofsted of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children or where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on our premises or elsewhere). Notifications to Ofsted are made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made.

### *Allegations against staff*

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, volunteer or any other person living or working on the premises, which includes:
  - inappropriate sexual comments;

- excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities, or inappropriate sharing of images.
- We follow the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board partners when responding to any complaint that a member of staff or volunteer within the setting has abused a child.
- We ensure that all staff and volunteers know how to raise concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within the setting. We respond to any concerns raised by staff and volunteers who know how to escalate their concerns if they are not satisfied with our response
- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We refer any such complaint immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to investigate and/or offer advice:

*Nigel Hatton 01452 426320*

*(name and phone number)*

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*Up-to-date contact details are always on the GSCP partners website should this number not be viable for any reason, here: <https://www.gscb.org.uk/i-work-with-children-young-people-and-parents/the-role-of-the-lado-and-the-allegations-management-process/>*

- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted (unless advised by LADO that this is unnecessary due to the incident not meeting the threshold), as well as what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by children's social care in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management team and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff, as well as children and families, throughout the process.

### *Disciplinary action*

Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of relevant information, so that individuals who pose a threat to children and vulnerable groups can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

### *Key commitment 3*

We are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout our training and learning programmes for adults. We are also committed to empowering children through our early childhood curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

### *Training*

- Training opportunities are sought for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse (including child

sexual exploitation) and neglect and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals.

- Designated persons receive appropriate training, as recommended by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board partners, every two years and refresh their knowledge and skills at least annually.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the provision.
- We ensure that all staff receive updates on safeguarding via emails, newsletters, online training and/or discussion at staff meetings at least once a year.

### *Planning*

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with volunteers or students in a one-to-one situation without being within sight and/or hearing of other staff.

### *Curriculum*

- We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for individuals, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

### *Confidentiality*

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board partners.

### *Support to families*

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



## Legal framework

### Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- The Children Act (2004 s11)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Childcare Act (2006)

### Secondary legislation

- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) \(2018\)](#)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations (2009)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)

## Further guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HMG, 2018)
- What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG, 2015)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH 2000)
- The Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: A Guide for Practitioners (CWDC 2010)
- Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2008)
- Hidden Harm – Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users (ACMD, 2003)
- Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners providing Safeguarding Services (DfE 2015)
- Disclosure and Barring Service: [www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check](http://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check)
- Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (HMG, 2015)
- Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings, (Ofsted, 2016)

This policy was adopted by

Cirencester Opportunity Group

On

February 2018 (date)

Reviewed

June 2021 (date)

Reviewed following updates

\*A 'young person' is defined as 16 to 19 years old – in our setting they may be a student, worker, volunteer or parent.