

Child protection policy

Child protection and promoting the welfare of children, for the sake of this policy is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing the impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

(Definition taken from the HM Government document 'Working together to safeguard children')

We support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children's health and development. Child protection is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single child protection policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with the other nursery policies and procedures.

Our nursery works with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.

To this end we:

- Create an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image
- Encourage children to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development
- Provide a safe and secure environment for all children
- Always listen to children.

Little Footsteps of Dereham has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare. Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of a nursery manager.

The legal framework for this policy is based on:

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

Practitioners have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of all children. Due to the many hours of care we are providing, staff will often be the first people to sense that there is a problem. They may well be the first people in whom children confide about abuse. The nursery has a duty to be aware that abuse does occur in our society.

This statement lays out the procedures that will be followed if we have any reason to believe that a child in our care is subject to welfare issues including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well-being of all children in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the children, parents and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention. All staff will work as part of a multi-agency team where needed in the best interests of the child.

The nursery aims to:

- Ensure that children are never placed at risk while in the charge of nursery staff
- Ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times
- Ensure that all staff are alert to the signs of abuse, understand what is meant by child protection and are aware of the different ways in which children can be harmed including by other children i.e. bullying, discriminatory behaviour
- Ensure that all staff are familiar and updated regularly with child protection issues and procedures
- Ensure parents are fully aware of child protection policies and procedures when they register with the nursery and are kept informed of all updates when they occur
- Keep the child at the centre of all we do
- Regularly review and update this policy with staff and parents where appropriate.

Children will be supported by offering reassurance, comfort and sensitive interactions. Activities will be devised according to individual circumstances to enable children to develop confidence within their peer group.

Contact telephone numbers

- **Ofsted 0300 123 1234**
- **CADS 0344 800 8020**
- **LADO 01603 223473**

Types of abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution, or community setting by those known to them or a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child or children.

The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused, but will help us to recognise that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

Physical abuse

Action needs to be taken if staff have reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning; where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g. fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles and face.

Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries – these should also be logged and discussed with the nursery manager or room leader.

Children and babies may be abused physically through shaking or throwing. Other injuries may include burns or scalds. These are not usual childhood injuries and should always be logged and discussed with the nursery manager

Procedure:

- All signs of marks/injuries to a child, when they come into nursery or occur during time at the nursery, will be recorded as soon as noticed by a staff member
- The incident will be discussed with the parent at the earliest opportunity
- Such discussions will be recorded and the parent will have access to such records
- If there appears to be any queries regarding the injury, the CADS team will be phoned for advise and if necessary a referral to the MASH team. This will be followed up in writing with a NSCB1 form

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Fabricated illness

This is also a type of physical abuse. This is where a child is presented with an illness that is fabricated by the adult carer. The carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation. The signs may include a carer exaggerating a real illness or symptoms, complete fabrication of symptoms or inducing physical illness e.g. through poisoning, starvation, inappropriate diet. This may also be presented through false allegations of abuse or encouraging the child to appear disabled or ill to obtain unnecessary treatment or specialist support.

Sexual abuse

Action needs to be taken under this heading if the staff member has witnessed occasion(s) where a child indicated sexual activity through words, play, drawing, had an excessive pre-occupation with sexual matters, or had an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour or language. This may include acting out sexual activity on dolls/toys or in the role play area with their peers, drawing pictures that are inappropriate for a child, talking about sexual activities or using sexual language or words. The child may become worried when their clothes are removed, e.g. for nappy changes.

The symptoms may also include a distinct change in a child's behaviour. They may be withdrawn or overly extroverted and outgoing. They may withdraw away from a particular adult and become distressed if they reach out for them, but they may also be particularly clingy to a potential abuser so all symptoms and signs should be looked at together and assessed as a whole.

If a child starts to talk openly to an adult about abuse they may be experiencing; the procedure stated later in this document under 'recording abuse suspicions' will be followed.

Procedure:

- The adult should reassure the child and listen without interrupting if the child wishes to talk
- The observed instances will be detailed in a confidential report
- The observed instances will be reported to the nursery manager
- CADS will be called for advice
- The matter will be referred to the MASH team by phone call and followed up with a NSCB1 form.

Emotional abuse

Action should be taken under this heading if the staff member has reason to believe that there is a severe, adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child, caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

This may include extremes of discipline where a child is shouted at or put down on a consistent basis, lack of emotional attachment by a parent, or it may include parents or carers placing inappropriate age or developmental expectations upon them. Emotional abuse may also be imposed through the child witnessing domestic abuse and alcohol and drug misuse by adults caring for them. This also includes Overprotective and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

The child is likely to show extremes of emotion with this type of abuse. This may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive or clingy in order to receive their love and attention. This type of abuse is harder to identify as the child is not likely to show any physical signs.

Procedure:

- The concern should be discussed with the room leader or a manager
- The concern will be discussed with the parent
- Such discussions will be recorded and the parent will have access to such records
- A Common Assessment Framework (FSP) may need to be completed
- If there appear to be any queries regarding the circumstances, the CADS team will be called for advice and if necessary the matter will be referred to the MASH team.

Neglect

Action should be taken under this heading if the staff member has reason to believe that there has been persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation and failure to seek medical treatment when required on behalf of the child), which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including failure to thrive.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at nursery unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child's growth or hurt them), arriving at nursery in the same nappy they went home in or a child having an illness that is not being addressed by the parent. A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child's needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g. a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at nursery. They may be clingy and emotional. In addition, neglect may occur through pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Procedure:

- Records of staff observations will be recorded
- The concern will be discussed with the parent
- Such discussions will be recorded and the parent will have access to such records
- A FSP may need to be completed

- If there appear to be any queries regarding the circumstances the CADS team will be called for advice and if necessary a referral to the MASH team. A NSCB1 form will follow the phone call.

Indicators of child abuse

- Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
- Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
- Aggressive behaviour
- Unexplained injuries to a child or conflicting reports from parents or staff
- Repeated injuries
- Unaddressed illnesses or injuries.

Additional safeguarding issues to be aware of and report any concerns

Child sexual exploitation

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact: it may also occur through the use of technology.

FGM – Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a procedure where female genitals area deliberately cut, injured or changed, but where there's no medical reason for this to be done. Its also known as 'Female circumcision' or 'Cutting'

FGM is often performed by someone with no medical training who uses instruments such as a knife, scalpel, scissors, glass or razor blade. Children area rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained.

FGM is often motivated by beliefs about what is considered acceptable sexual behaviour. It aims to ensure premarital virginity and marital fidelity. FGM is in many communities believed to reduce a woman's libido and therefore believed to help her resist extramarital sexual acts.

It is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to perform FGM overseas or take their child abroad to have FGM carried out. The maximum penalty for FGM is 14 years imprisonment.

Forced Marriage

People have the right to choose who they marry, when they marry or if they marry at all.

Forced marriage is when some face physical pressure to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if they are made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family).

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales. This includes:

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
- Marrying someone who lacks mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they are pressured to or not)

Honour Abuse

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not keeping in with traditional beliefs of their culture. For example, honour based violence might be committed against people who:

- Become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion
- Want to get out of an arranged marriage
- Want to get out of a forced marriage
- Wear clothes or take part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular culture

Women and girls are the most common victims of honour abuse based violence however it can also affect men and boys. Crimes of 'honour' do not always include violence.

Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' might include:

- Domestic abuse
- Treats of violence
- Sexual or psychological abuse
- Forced marriage
- Being held against your will or taken somewhere the victim doesn't want to go
- Assault/killing

Prevent

The 2011 Prevent strategy has three specific strategic objectives:

- Respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat we face from those who promote it:
- Prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support: and

- Work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address

Terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology, developed by extremist organisations. Some people who join terrorist groups have previously been members of extremist organisations and have been radicalised by them. The Government has defined extremism in the Prevent strategy 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. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces".

County lines

A term used to describe gangs and organised crime networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Child criminal exploitation

A term to describe where an individual or groups takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity:

- a) In exchange for something the victim needs or wants : and/or
- b) For financial or other advantage or the perpetrator or facilitator and/or
- c) Through violence or the threat of violence.

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact: it can also occur through the use of technology.

Possession or witchcraft

The belief in "possession or "witchcraft" is widespread. It is not confined to particular countries, cultures or religions, nor is it confined to new immigrant communities in this country.

Such abuse generally occurs when a carer views a child as being "different", attributes this difference to the child being "possessed" or involved in "witchcraft" and attempts to exorcise him or her.

A child could be viewed as "different" for a variety of reasons such as, disobedience; independence; bed-wetting; nightmares; illness; or disability.

There is often a weak bond of attachment between the carer and the child.

There are various social reasons that make a child more vulnerable to an accusation of “possession” or “witchcraft”. These include family stress and/or a change in the family structure. The attempt to “exorcise” may look like any of the following:

Physical abuse

This can involve ritualistic beating, burning, cutting, stabbing, semi-strangling, tying up the child, or rubbing chilli peppers or other substances on the child's genitals or eyes.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse can occur in the form of isolation. A child may not be allowed near or to share a room with family members, and threatened with abandonment. The child may also be convinced that they are possessed.

Neglect

In situations of neglect, the child's family and community may have failed to ensure appropriate medical care, supervision, education, good hygiene, nourishment, clothing or warmth.

Sexual abuse

Children who have been singled out in this way can be particularly vulnerable to sexual abusers within the family, community or faith organisation. These people exploit the belief as a form of control or threat.

Where does it happen?

Child abuse linked to faith or belief is not confined to one faith, nationality or ethnic community. Examples have been recorded worldwide across various religions including Christians, Muslims and Hindus.

The number of known cases suggests that only a small minority of people who believe in witchcraft or spirit possession go on to abuse children and adults.

Abuse may happen anywhere, but it most commonly occurs within the child's home.

Common factors and causes

A range of factors can contribute to the abuse of a child for reasons of faith or belief. Some of the most common ones are below.

Belief in evil spirits

Belief in evil spirits that can 'possess' children is often accompanied by a belief that a possessed child can 'infect' others with the condition. This could be through contact with shared food, or simply being in the presence of the child.

Scapegoating

A child could be singled out as the cause of misfortune within the home, such as financial difficulties, divorce, infidelity, illness or death.

Bad behaviour

Sometimes bad or abnormal behaviour is attributed to spiritual forces. Examples include a child being disobedient, rebellious, overly independent, wetting the bed, having nightmares or falling ill.

Physical and emotional differences

A child could be singled out for having a physical difference or disability. Documented cases included children with learning disabilities, mental health issues, epilepsy, autism, stammers, deafness and LGBTQ+.

What to look out for

Indicators of child abuse linked to faith or belief include the following:

- physical injuries, such as bruises or burns (including historical injuries/scaring)
- a child reporting that they are or have been accused of being 'evil', and/or that they are having the 'devil beaten out of them'
- the child or family may use words such as 'kindoki', 'djin', 'juju' or 'voodoo' - all of which refer to spiritual beliefs
- a child becoming noticeably confused, withdrawn, disorientated or isolated and appearing alone amongst other children
- a child's personal care deteriorating (eg rapid loss of weight, being hungry, turning up to school without food or lunch money, being unkempt with dirty clothes)
- it may be evident that the child's parent or carer does not have a close bond with the child
- a child's attendance at school or college becomes irregular or there is a deterioration in a child's performance
- a child is taken out of a school altogether without another school place having been arranged
- Wearing unusual jewellery/items or in possession of strange ornaments/scripts.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

Staff should make an objective record (supported by the nursery manager or Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator (DSCO)) of any observation or disclosure and include:

- Child's name
- Child's address
- Age of the child and date of birth
- Date and time of the observation or the disclosure
- Exact words spoken by the child
- Exact position and type of injuries or marks seen
- Exact observation of an incident including any other witnesses
- Name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time.
- Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate).

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and a manager should then sign, date and keep in a separate confidential file.

If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse it is important **not** to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly and disclosure is not forced or words put into the child's mouth. As soon as possible after the disclosure it is vital details are logged down accurately.

It may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with the LSCB and Ofsted and/or a FSP needs to be initiated. Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information/concerns they have with regard to a child. The nursery expects all members of staff to co-operate with the LSCB and Ofsted in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about a parent's or staff's supposed or actual behaviour.

Staffing and volunteering

It is the policy of the nursery to provide a secure and safe environment for all children. The nursery will therefore not allow an adult to be left alone with a child who has not received their enhanced DBS disclosure clearance.

All staff will attend child protection training within their first six months of employment, and receive initial basic training during their induction period. This will include the procedures for spotting signs and behaviours of abuse and abusers, recording and reporting concerns and creating a safe and secure environment for the children in the nursery.

We have a named person within the nursery that co-ordinates child protection and welfare issues. The nursery Designated Safeguarding Co-ordinator (DSCO) undertakes specific training and accesses regular updates to developments within this field.

The DSCO at the nursery is: Gemma Hewett

The deputy DSCO's are Donna Nevill and Abi Hannat

- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children
- Applicants for posts within the nursery are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information
- All enhanced DBS checks will be updated on a regular basis to ensure the suitability of the adults caring for the children
- We abide by Ofsted requirements in respect of references and suitability checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unfit person works at the nursery or has access to the children
- We ensure we receive at least two written references BEFORE a new member of staff commences employment with us
- All students will have enhanced DBS checks conducted on them before their placement starts
- Volunteers, including students, do not work unsupervised
- We abide by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have lead to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern
- We abide by the Childcare (disqualification) Regulations 2009 whereby staff will be asked if they live with anyone who has be cautioned or convicted of any violent or sexual act against a child or adult.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the nursery and take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the nursery, so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children
- All regular contractors/external workers will be enhanced DBS checked and the manager will request this before allowing them access to the nursery. All visitors/contractors will still be accompanied whilst on the premises, especially when in the areas the children use.
- All staff have access to a whistle-blowing policy which will enable them to share any concerns that may arise about their colleagues in an appropriate manner
- All staff will receive regular supervision meetings where opportunities will be made available to discuss child protection training and any needs for further support

The deployment of staff within the nursery allows for constant supervision and support. Where children need to spend time away from the rest of the group, the door will be left ajar or other safeguards will be placed into action to ensure the safety of the child and the adult.

Informing parents

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the LSCB does not allow this. This will usually be the case where the parent or family member is the likely abuser, or where a child may be endangered by this disclosure. In these cases the investigating officers will inform parents.

Confidentiality

All suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the LSCB.

Support to families

- The nursery takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff and volunteers within the nursery
- The nursery continues to welcome the child and the family whilst enquiries are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgmental manner whilst any external investigations are carried out in the best interests of the child

Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child, only if appropriate under the guidance of the LSCB with the proviso that the care and safety of the child is paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

Covid-19

During the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 we ensure that we follow Government guidelines regarding operations. This means that we are only open to Key workers and Vulnerable children. A lot of children and families are therefore not having face to face contact with us for support on a daily or weekly basis.

In order to safeguard children during this time, we are supporting parents by sending home activities via email, Dojo and Tapestry for the parents to complete with the children.

We are communicating with parents via email, phone, Dojo and Tapestry to answer any questions they may have regarding routines, boundaries, discipline and more.

We are sending care packages home to the families with physical activities in for children to do.

We have made it clear that if parents are struggling having children at home and this is impacting upon their mental health that we can have the children in nursery.

We have contacted parents of those children who we feel are vulnerable and have had discussions with them about how they are coping, what is working well what they are struggling with and if they need any help.

We are producing a monthly newsletter which shows other children completing activities, giving parents and children ideas of activities.

We have extended the support we offer through Facebook too, completing 'live' stories, songs and activities with the families and children on a weekly basis.

To ensure that safety is maintained online Facebook posts and 'lives' are 'invite only' to the parents who access our nursery normally.

GDPR is followed when posting images of children.

Dojo and Tapestry are password protected for the specific staff and parents of the child.

Employees or volunteers of the nursery

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, we will follow the HM Government guidance in '*Working together to safeguard children*'.

The allegation should be reported to the senior manager on duty. If this person is the subject of the allegation then this should be reported to the other manager of the nursery.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Ofsted and the LSCB will then be informed immediately in order for this to be investigated by the appropriate bodies promptly:

- LADO will be informed immediately for advice and guidance, this is by sending a referral form to them, they will then call you back to discuss the content and the next steps
- A full investigation will be carried out by the appropriate professionals (LADO, Ofsted, LSCB) to determine how this will be handled
- The nursery will follow all instructions from the LADO, Ofsted, LSCB and asks all staff members to do the same and co-operate where required
- If the allegation could possibly interfere with the normal working of the nursery, the member of staff or volunteer will be allocated to another area, after due consultation with all parties and professionals, including the LADO
- Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation in line with LADO support and advice

- The nursery reserves the right to suspend any member of staff on full pay during an investigation
- All enquiries/external investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file
- Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being re-instated
- Founded allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisation (police) and will result in the termination of employment. Ofsted will be notified immediately of this decision. The nursery is also required to notify the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to ensure their records are updated
- All records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that is longer. This will ensure accurate information is available for references and future DBS checks and avoid any unnecessary re-investigation
- The nursery retains the right to dismiss any member of staff in connection with founded allegations following an inquiry

Bribery

Staff can accept gifts up to the value of £10 for occasions such as, Christmas, child leaving. Staff should not be being bought gifts that do not link to a special occasion or for more than the value of £10 as this can be seen as a bribe and staff could become coerced in to covering up actions of parents that should not be happening.

This policy works in conjunction with all other policies in order to keep children safe, including the camera usage, social media and mobile phone policy.

Internal use only

This policy was first adopted on	6th Feb 2012
Signed on behalf of the nursery	GH (Gemma Hewett)
Date disseminated to staff	26th March 2012
Dated Reviewed & small alterations made	August 2022
Next review dated	August 2023