

1.5 Child Protection Policy

Policy statement

Belfield Montessori Day Nursery works with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments.

Key commitment 1

Belfield Montessori Day Nursery is committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of its service delivery.

Staff and volunteers

- Our designated person who co-ordinates Child Protection issues is:

Ashleigh Jackson - Deputy manager

Safeguarding children course Level 3 was refreshed in August 2024 and is retaken every 2 years.

In the absence of our safeguarding officer we have a back-up plan in place. The back up person(s) in charge is Alexandra Pacayova (Director) Christina Whymark (Manager) Tamsin Barkla-Mogford/Lucy Balducci (Joint 3rd in Charge)

- All DSL's complete Level 3 safeguarding training which includes safer recruitment, managing allegations, online safety and local child protection procedures.
- We ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures, staff complete online safeguarding legal framework training which is renewed every 2 years. All staff are supported with keeping up to date, applying training effectively in practice as part of our Supervision (every 2 months) by undertaking a Safeguarding Quiz to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of our Safeguarding Policy. We offer in house training refreshers for staff members who need additional support.
- Belfield Parents/Carers are made aware of them by having a copy available in reception.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues and attend safeguarding training every 2 years as well as regular updates and refreshers via online training, questionnaires and staff meetings in order to have a clear understanding of the signs and symptoms of all types of abuse and to respond appropriately to help protect a child from harm.
- Applicants for posts within the provision are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out 'enhanced disclosure' checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and DBS certificate must be shown to management 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.
- We abide by Ofsted requirements in respect of references and DBS checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the provision or has access to the children.
- We record information about staff qualifications. The identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
 - the DBS reference number;
 - the date and who the disclosure was obtained by;
 - We inform all staff 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).
- Volunteers 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 led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
- We take security steps to ensure we have control over who comes into the provision so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- We take steps 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.
- As our priority is to keep children safe at our setting, all our staff have got to ensure that their mobile phone is placed in the office/staff lockers at the arrival to the nursery. Our staff are aware that social networking about nursery, children and parents is not allowed **(see policy 1.6 Policy on the use of mobile phones, cameras, Social Networking and E-Safety (including all electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities))**.
- Management monitors staff use of cameras and tablets, checking all photos are appropriate and for development use only. Management also monitors that staff follow our policy on mobile phones/electronic devices.
- We are aware of E-safety, children are supervised at all times when using online equipment such as the laptop or tablets and children take part in regular discussions about keeping themselves safe.

Key commitment 2

Belfield Montessori Day Nursery is committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents 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 2006).

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, FGM, prevent and incel. We ensure to meet the needs of all children including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with medical conditions.
- When children are suffering from abuse, they may demonstrate it in a variety of ways such as:
 - 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 take into account factors affecting parental capacity, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parent's drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parent's learning disability.
- We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability such as abuse of disabled children, children from LGBTQ+ families, fabricated or induced illness, child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession, sexual exploitation of children such as through internet abuse and Female Genital Mutilation that may affect or may have affected children and young people using our provision.
- Staff members are aware of the steps they must follow if they have concerns about a child, having a duty to report to MASH and failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions.
- We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with. Staff are aware that sometimes peer on peer abuse can occur and are able to follow the child protection policy in order to keep all children safe.
- We have a duty of care to prevent our children and staff from being drawn into terrorism, incel and extremism, therefore we follow our prevent duty policy. All staff have regular training on prevent duty as well as refresher questionnaires to keep their knowledge up to date.
- All staff take part in Safeguarding Quiz – which takes place several times per year, to ensure all staff have relevant knowledge and expertise on Safeguarding.

- We are aware that children who are absent from nursery on repeat occasions or for extended periods of time without parental explanations, might be at risk. Therefore, management monitors children's attendance and will report regular and unexplained absences to the necessary agencies.
- Where we believe a child in our care or known to us may be affected by any of these factors we follow the procedure for reporting child protection concerns.
- 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 member of staff who is acting as the 'designated person'. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- We refer concerns to the MASH team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.
- **MASH TEAM – tel. number displayed in the office on the notice board, as well as in all rooms - 0208 359 4066**

NB: In some cases this may mean the police or another agency may be identified by the Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board.

- We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
- 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.

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Female Genital Mutilation -Current Legislation

FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since 1985. In 2003 it also became a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to take their child abroad to have female genital mutilation. Anyone found guilty of the offences faces a maximum penalty of 4 years in prison.

Our staff have completed online FGM Awareness course, and will follow procedures to log and report any concerning matters.

Incel

Incel - an acronym for involuntary celibacy - is a term that represents a member of an online subculture of people who define themselves as incapable of attaining a romantic-sexual partner, even though they want one, these groups of people use online Incel discussion forums are often characterized by resentment and hatred, misogyny, self-pity, self-loathing, a sense of the right to sex, racism and approval of violence against women and sexually active people. These forums are permeated with conspiracy theories and the complete absence of nuanced and informed debate

Procedure to protect a child

Staff members are fully aware of the procedures they must follow, which is clearly displayed below:

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), observes signs or signals that gives 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;
 - does not question the child;
 - 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 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 child protection file which is kept securely and confidentially.
- The Manager and safeguarding officer is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity.
- Where the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board/**Mash Team**.

Making a referral to the MASH team in Barnet

- For making a referral to the MASH team, This is based on 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' (HMG 2006).

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. We discuss concerns with parents to gain their view of events unless we feel this may put the child in greater danger.

- We inform parents 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 Barnet Safeguarding Children Board does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed in greater danger.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases the social workers will inform parents.

Liaison with other agencies

- We work within the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board guidelines.
- We have the current version of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' and all staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- We liaise with Mash Team and Lado.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names and telephone numbers of the child's existing social worker, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and social services to work well together.
- We notify the registration authority (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 48 hours. **OFSTED - 0300 123 4666**
- *Allegations against staff*
- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the provision, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, or any other person working with the children, 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 Barnet Safeguarding Children Board/MASH team, Lado when responding to any complaint that a member of staff, or volunteer within the provision, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, has abused a child or if there is an allegation against a member of staff.

- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We contact LADO and take on their advice and next steps. We send off a referral to LADO team to protect our member of staff
- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted and what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- The member of staff is suspended immediately
- We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by LADO in conjunction with the police, MASH team, OFSTED and any other agencies possibly involved.
- Where the management team and LADO/MASH, etc agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the director will suspend the member of staff on full pay, or the volunteer, 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.
- 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 Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- We strictly work on an Action plan which will ensure all correct steps are taken to ensure safety and re-assurance to all parties (individuals involved).
- We follow the guidelines of Lado and Ofsted to ensure that the outcome of the Investigation and the Action plan is followed thoroughly.
- Outcomes following an investigation – please follow 9.9 Disciplinary policy.

Disciplinary action

- Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to sufficient evidence of engaging in activities that caused concern for the Safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we will notify the Lado and Ofsted 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

Belfield Montessori Day Nursery is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout its training and learning programmes for staff. It is also committed to empowering young children, through its early childhood curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

Training

- We seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of all possible types of abuse and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals.
- We ensure that our staff have received Safeguarding training as well as Nappy changing procedure Training by our Safeguarding OFFICER.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting.

Planning

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision.
- We follow an open door policy in our children's toilets and nappy changing areas.

Curriculum

- We introduce key elements of keeping children safe to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be *strong, resilient and listened to* and that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within our setting a culture of value and respect for the individual, 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 is key in regards to any investigation or case taking place at Belfield

Montessori Day Nursery.

Support to families

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.
- We make it clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the MASH 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 care worker, by the Lado or the Mash team, 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 Barnet Safeguarding Children Board/Mash Team.

Absence from Nursery

At times, children may require long leaves of absence due to family circumstances and personal issues, if the child remains registered with the setting during this time we will keep in touch by making fortnightly phone calls with the parents, offering home learning ideas and any support they may require.

When children are off for single days/weeks due to a specific reason/illness, parents are asked to inform the nursery via phone/email on the first day of absence, letting us know why and when they expect the child to return.

If we do not receive contact, we will get in touch via phone/email 2 hours after their usual arrival time, the nursery will attempt to make contact to the parents/carers.

We would continue to try to make contact via phone/email for 24 hours and would then try to make contact with the emergency contacts held on the child's file.

If we are unable to get in touch with the family within 7 days, we will refer concerns to the **MASH TEAM – tel. number displayed in the office on the notice board, as well as in all rooms - 0208 359 4066**

Legal framework

Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)

Secondary legislation

- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)
- Equalities Act (2010)
- Data Protection Act (1998) Non Statutory Guidance

Further Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (under revision 2012)
- What to do if you are Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG 2006)
- 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 2007)
- Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers (HMG 2008)
- Independent Safeguarding Authority: www.isa-gov.org.uk