

Safeguarding and Child Protection

(Including Managing Allegations Of Abuse Against A Member Of Staff)

Policy Statement

Chestnut Playgroup fully recognises the responsibility to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, and are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults* and will do this by putting young people and vulnerable adult's right to be '*strong, resilient and listened to*' at the heart of all our activities.

Appendix A must be read alongside the setting's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Which provides staff, including agency staff, volunteers, students and parents/carers with details about specific safeguarding concerns that may impact on the welfare of children in their care or living locally. As a society we all have a duty to safeguarding children but it is particularly important that those working or volunteering with children remain vigilant to the signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Staff, agency staff, volunteers and students should be familiar with the safeguarding procedures within the setting and know how to respond to concerns about children or adults.

Through their day to day contact with children and direct work with families, our staff (paid or unpaid) including agency staff, students and volunteers at playgroup have a crucial role to play in safeguarding children and noticing indicators of possible abuse or neglect and referring them to the appropriate agency. We recognise that high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and good lines of communication with a trusted adult help to protect children. In order to achieve this, we will establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, and are encouraged to talk and are listened to, where children can feel comfortable approaching an adult in the playgroup if they are worried or in difficulty, and equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from abuse and information on how to seek help. Concerned parents/carers may also contact the setting's Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSL) for Child Protection.

This policy sets out how the setting complies with their statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who attend the setting. The policy will be reviewed regularly, annually as a minimum.

Our Safeguarding Policy is based on the three Key Commitments of the Early Years Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy.

Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments of the Safeguarding Children Policy.

Key Commitment 1

Chestnut Playgroup is 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.

Staff, Agency Staff, Volunteers and Students

- Our Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) (DSL) (a member of staff who has completed a minimum Level 1 and 2 Child Protection Training) who co-ordinates child, young person or adult protection issues are:
Samantha Redhead supported by Molly Miller
- Our Designated Liaison (DL) on the committee (a committee member who has sufficient knowledge of Child Protection) who supports this work is:
Emily Steele (Chair)
- The DSL and DL ensure they have links with statutory and voluntary organisations with regard to Child Protection.
- The DSL and DL ensure they have received appropriate training on Child Protection matters and that all staff are adequately informed and/or trained to recognise possible child abuse in the categories of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- The DSL(s) for Child Protection will be available at all times for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns. The importance of the role of the DSL is acknowledged by ensuring they have the time and training to undertake their duties.
- The DSL and DL ensure all staff are aware of the additional vulnerabilities that affect children that arise from inequalities of race, gender, disability, language, religion, sexual orientation or culture and that these receive full consideration in child, young person or adult protection related matters.
- We ensure all staff are trained to understand our Child Protection policies and procedures and parents/carers are made aware of them too.
- All staff understand that safeguarding is their responsibility.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of Child Protection issues, are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, and understand their professional duty to ensure child protection concerns are reported to the Local Authority children's social work team or the NSPCC.
- The 'DSL' and the 'Designated Liaison' ensure that staff are aware and receive training in social factors affecting children's vulnerability including:
 - social exclusion
 - domestic violence and controlling or coercive behaviour
 - mental illness
 - drug and alcohol abuse (substance misuse)
 - parental learning disability
 - radicalisation
- All staff and leaders receive regular Safeguarding and Child Protection updates (at least annually), with the DSL for Child Protection having their training refreshed every two years and their knowledge and skills updated annually, via information sources such as the DSL Knowledge Hub, Child Protection Information Networks, further relevant training and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.
- The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board procedures, Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018 and What to Do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused, 2015 are adhered to. The 'DSL' has contact details for Cambridgeshire Children's Social Care and the Early Help Hub (01480 376666) readily

accessible for use when required. Bordering county Social Care and Early Help contact details are available, as required, for children who live outside of Cambridgeshire.

- If you are worried that a child or young person is at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation you can use the below phone numbers.
 - ESSEX Children's social care – 0345 603 7627
 - ESSEX Children's social care out of hours – 0345 606 1212
 - SUFFOLK Call Customer First – 0808 800 4005
- Concerned parents/carers must call 999 if they feel a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk of harm.
- Concerned parents/carers can speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) for Child Protection if you are concerned about a child but they are not at immediate risk of harm. During out of hours they can contact Children's Social Care on 0345 045 5203 (out of hours duty number is 01733 234724).
- The 'DSL' and the 'Designated Liaison' ensure that staff are aware and receive training in other ways that children may suffer significant harm and stay up to date with relevant contextual safeguarding matters:
 - abuse of disabled children
 - fabricated or induced illness
 - child abuse linked to spirit possession
 - sexually exploited children
 - children who are trafficked and/or exploited
 - female genital mutilation
 - extra-familial abuse and threats
 - children involved in violent offending, with gangs and county lines.
- All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any child protection concerns and know not to just take things at face value but can be respectfully sceptical.
- All staff understand the principles of Early Help (as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018) 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 the thresholds of significant harm and understand how to access services for families, including for those families who are below the threshold for significant harm, according to arrangements published by the LSCB or safeguarding partners in areas where the safeguarding partners have replaced the LSCB.
- Chestnut Playgroup adheres to the Bruising in Pre-Mobile Babies Protocol published by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.
- All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, and understand relevant safeguarding legislation, statutory requirements and local safeguarding partner requirements and ensure that any information they may share about parents/carers and their children with other agencies is shared appropriately and lawfully.
- We will support families to receive appropriate early help by sharing information with other agencies in accordance with statutory requirements and legislation.
- We will share information lawfully with safeguarding partners and other agencies where there are safeguarding concerns.
- We will be transparent about how we lawfully process data.
- 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 and know how to follow local safeguarding procedures to resolve professional disputes between staff and organisations.
- 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 Cameras And 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.
- Committee members and volunteers are aware and knowledgeable of our Child Protection policy and the requirements associated with this.
- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the playgroup are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- The setting will follow safer recruitment practices including Enhanced Criminal Records & Barred Lists checks (DBS) and other reference/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. (Note that for this purpose volunteers are defined as those who work in the setting and are treated like staff but are not paid for their role).
- Where applications are rejected based on information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- We record information 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.
- We inform all staff and volunteers 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).
- Helpers including parent/carer helpers do not work unsupervised.
- 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.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the playgroup.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the playgroup 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/carers sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child. Any images of children are held securely and in a locked filing cabinet when

- not in use. Staff do not use personal cameras or filming equipment to record images of children.
- Images must be used in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- We take steps to ensure staff are fully aware of the Online Safety (including Mobile Phones and Cameras) Policy and support the setting in safeguarding children online.
- Personal mobile phones are not used where children are present, unless in the event of an emergency if the setting mobile is unusable, with permission from the manager/committee.
- We are very aware of the dangers of online abuse and we have appropriate filters and monitoring systems in place to protect learners from harmful online material. We follow our Online Safety policy.
- Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the ICO.
- The DSL in the setting has 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.
- The DL will support the DSL to undertake their role adequately and offer advice, guidance, supervision and support.
- The DSL will inform the DL at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, however this should not delay any referrals being made to the children's social worker services, or where appropriate, the LADO, Ofsted or RIDDOR.
- All staff understand the setting policy on babysitting for families who attend the setting. A copy of this can be found in the policies folder or on our website.
- We will always try to promote supportive engagement with parents/carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances.

Key Commitment 2

Chestnut Playgroup 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 2015) and 'No Secrets' (updated by the Care Act 2014) and Working Together 2018.

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 inequalities of race, gender, disability, 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 may be 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 understand how to identify children who may be in need of early help, and how to access services for them.
- We understand that we should refer a child who meets the s17 Children Act 1989 child in need definition to local authority children's social work services
- We understand that we should refer any child who may be at risk of significant harm to local authority children's social work services.
- We consider factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, parent's/carer's substance misuse, mental or physical illness or parent's/carer'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 department. Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16, (under 18 if disabled) is provided with care and accommodation by a person who is not a parent, person with parental responsibility for them or relative in their own home for 28 days or more. The setting will follow the mandatory duty to inform the Local Authority of any 'Private Fostering' arrangements and refer to the Specialist Fostering 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 disabled children; 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 and radicalisation or extremism.
- 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, such as students.
- If we become concerned that a child may be a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking we will refer to the National Referral Mechanism, as soon as possible and refer and/or seek advice to the local authority children's social work service and/or police.
- We will be alert to the threats children may face from outside their families, such as that posed by organised crime groups such as county lines and child sexual exploitation, online use and from within peer groups and the wider community.
- We are aware of the possibility of 'peer-on-peer'/child on child abuse and continuously monitor behaviour for the possibility of this, particularly amongst vulnerable children.
- We recognise that it can be more difficult to recognise signs of abuse or neglect amongst children who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are mindful of this issue.

- 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 and child in need concerns.
- Where such indicators are apparent, the child's Key Person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the playgroup leader or the staff member who is acting as the 'DSL'. 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 of the DSL in relation to whether to make a Child Protection referral they must follow escalation procedures.
- We refer concerns about the child's welfare to the local authority children's social care department and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.

NB In some cases this may mean the police or another agency identified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (or the local safeguarding partners when their published safeguarding arrangements take over from the LSCB).

- We respond to any disclosures sensitively and appropriately and take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children (although we may check out/clarity the details of what we think they have told us with them).
- If a child discloses information that may indicate that they are at risk of abuse or neglect, the staff member will be clear that they cannot promise to keep the information a secret. The staff member will be honest with the child and explain that it will be necessary to tell someone else in order to help them and to keep them safe.
- A note will be made of what information has been shared and with whom.
- 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/carers. Where abuse or neglect 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 in an age appropriate way, 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, as described in our Information Sharing Policy.
- We have a Whistleblowing policy in place.

Recording Suspicions Of Abuse And Disclosures

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff 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 ask the child leading questions;
 - 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, a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, details of how the concern was followed up and resolved, a note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.
 - Information sharing decisions must be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. If the decision is to share, reasons should be cited including what information has been shared and with whom. If the decision is not to share, the DSL will record the reasons for this decision and discuss them with the person requesting the information.
- These records are signed and dated and kept securely and confidentially.
- The DSL is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity and always within 1 working day.
- Where the Local Safeguarding Children Board or local safeguarding partners safeguarding procedures stipulate the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Making A Referral To The Local Authority Social Care Team

- The phone number for Cambridgeshire Children's Social Care is:
For members of the public: 0345 045 5203, Monday to Friday, 8am - 5pm
or the Emergency Duty Team on 01733 234724
For Professionals: 0345 0451362 Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm or the out of hours team on 01733 234724
Early Years' service email (for procedural enquiries) – earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- We keep a copy of this document alongside procedures set down by our Local Safeguarding Children Board which we follow where local procedures differ from those of the Early Years Alliance.

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 LSCB escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.

Communication with Parents/Carers

- Parents/carers are normally the first point of contact. We normally discuss concerns with parents/carers to gain their view of events unless we feel this may put the child or other person at risk, or may interfere with the course of a police investigation, or may unduly delay the referral, or unless it is otherwise unreasonable to seek consent. Advice will be sought from Social Care, or in some circumstances police, where necessary.
- Fears about sharing information will not stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect. The UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe:

information will be shared legally without consent, if the DSL or a member of staff is unable to or cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent from the individual, or if to gain consent could place a child at risk.'

- Relevant personal information will be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or individual at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional well-being.' (Information Sharing, July 2018, Page 5)
- We inform parents/carers 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.
- Record on the log of concern form what discussions have taken place with parents/carers and if a decision was made not to discuss the matter with parents/carers, the reason why not (circumstances may include if the DSL is unable to or cannot be reasonably expected to gain consent from the individual, or if gaining consent could place a child at risk of harm such as potential physical or sexual abuse).
- Unless it would place the child at risk of significant harm, parents/carers will be informed that a Record of Concern Form has been completed, where it will be stored and what will happen to it when the child leaves the setting.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to Social Care, parents/carers are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk.
- This will usually be the case where the parent/carer is the likely abuser or where sexual abuse may have occurred.
- Children's Social Care will be contacted first if the setting believes that notifying parents/carers about a safeguarding concern may place the child or another person at immediate risk of harm or prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. Further guidance on this can be found in the 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough document'.
- Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to access child welfare records and consideration will be given as to what the consequences of information sharing might be (in line with Information Sharing Guidance, 2024).

Liaison With Other Agencies And Multi-Agency Working

- We work within the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners guidelines, to develop effective links with relevant services to promote the safety and welfare of all children.
- We have the current version of 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' for parents/carers and staff and all staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- Co-operate as required, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, with key agencies in their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance and providing written reports at child protection conferences and core groups.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority on Child Protection issues and concerns about children's welfare, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and social services to work well together.
- We will notify the relevant Social Care team immediately if there is an unexplained absence or there is any change in circumstances to a child who is subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- We will notify the relevant Social Care team immediately if there are any further abuse or neglect concerns (such as fresh marks, bruises or injuries) where a child is already subject to a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan. It will not be assumed that Social Care are already aware of these additional concerns.
- We will respond to requests for information about children in the setting's care from the Education Navigator at the Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH) or a Social Worker in a timely manner.
- 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, and any specific procedures such as responding to concerns about radicalisation or extremism (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.
- Contact details for the local National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) are also kept.
- We will link with DSL(s) in other settings and schools where we share families.

When A Child Leaves Or Moves To Another Setting

Their individual child welfare file will be transferred to the receiving school or setting using the following protocol:

- The file will be sent as soon as possible after the child has moved setting and marked 'Confidential, Addressee Only' and sent to the DSL, if known, of the receiving setting/school. The file will be delivered by hand if possible; otherwise sent by delivery that can be tracked and signed for.
- The setting will contact the receiving setting/school by telephone to make them aware that there is a child welfare file and, once sent, ask them to confirm they have received the file. The setting will keep a record that the file has been received to be able to identify its location.
- Parents/carers will be made aware that child welfare records will be transferred unless this would place the child at risk of acute harm.
- The setting will not keep a copy of transferred records, unless there are younger siblings for whom there are similar concerns about but will keep a record of the current file location and date the file was transferred.
- If individual child welfare files cannot be transferred for any reason, the setting will archive them for 25 years from the child's date of birth.
- All actions and decisions will be led by what is considered to be in the best interests of the child and rationales are included for all discussions and decisions made.

Allegations Against Staff And Persons In A Position Of Trust

We ensure that all parents/carers know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the

playgroup, or anyone working on the premises occupied by the playgroup, which may include an allegation of abuse. We also ensure that all staff or volunteers know how to raise concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within the setting. We differentiate between allegations, and concerns about the quality of care or practice and complaints and have a separate process for responding to complaints. 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.

If an allegation is made against a staff member, agency staff, student or volunteer, the following action will be taken (as per the 'Managing Allegations of Abuse against Adults who Work or Volunteer in a Childcare Setting' flowchart and guidance):

- The setting will take all necessary steps to ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- The concern will be logged and passed immediately to the DSL for Child Protection.
- Follow the Allegation against a person who works or volunteers with children Flow Chart and Guidance (Jan 2021)
- Discuss with the setting manager or DSL
- Manager/SENCO/DSL will consider completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) after gaining parental consent and contacting the Early Help Hub for further advice: **01480 376666**
- DSL will decide what action to take, which may include a referral to Children's Social Care. If the DSL is unavailable or not contactable, for any reason, and there are immediate concerns about a child's welfare, we will contact Children's Social Care.
- The setting will immediately contact the Early Years Named Senior Officer (if the Early Years Named Senior Officer is not contactable, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be contacted direct).
- The setting will notify Ofsted of a significant incident.
- The Early Years Named Senior Officer will notify the LADO, who will decide if it could be a child protection case.
- If the LADO decides the matter is a child protection case, external/internal agencies (e.g. police) will be informed by the LADO and the setting will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised.
- It may be necessary that the Committee Chair will suspend the member of staff on full pay, or the volunteer, for the duration of the investigation. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
- If it is agreed that the matter is not a child protection case, the setting will investigate the matter themselves, gaining Committee advice as required.
- Senior Adviser Intervention and Safeguarding: **Gemma Hope - 01223 714760**
 - LADO Unit Contact Details: **01223 727967** or **LADO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk** or Fax **01223 475942**
 - Ofsted Unit Contact Details: **0300 123 1231**
 - Early Year's Service: **earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

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 (DBS) 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

Chestnut Playgroup is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout its training and learning programmes for adults. 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 playgroup 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. All staff members will receive Basic Child Protection training as a minimum requirement. This training is retaken every three years in line with government guidelines.
- We ensure that DSLs and senior staff members i.e. the Playgroup Leader and Deputy Leader will also receive DSL Training and any other training in accordance with that recommended by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have in the setting.

Planning

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others. We have an 'open door' policy for toilet trips and nappy changing so that staff supervising the toilets or changing nappies are always visible to other staff members.

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 that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the 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

- 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/Local Safeguarding Partners and in line with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) Guidance 'Information sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers' April 2024.

Supporting Children

- We recognise that any child may be subject to abuse or witness abuse and that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Children may also find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and trust those around them. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of self-blame. The setting may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk. Nevertheless, when attending, their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn.
- We recognise that some children adopt abusive behaviours and that these children must be referred for appropriate support and intervention.
- The setting will endeavour to support the child through:
 - the content of the curriculum and day to day practice to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation.
 - an ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment that values people.
 - a behaviour policy aimed at supporting all children. All staff and volunteers agree on a consistent approach which focuses on the behaviour of the child and does not damage the child's sense of self-worth. The setting will ensure that the child knows that some behaviour is unacceptable, but she/he is valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred.
 - liaison with other agencies which support the child.
 - a commitment to developing productive and supportive relationships whenever it is in a child's best interest to do so,
 - promote supportive engagement with parents/carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances.
 - recognition that children living in a home environment where there is domestic violence, mental ill-health or substance misuse may be vulnerable and in need of support and protection.
 - vigilantly monitoring children's welfare, keeping records and notifying the social care services as soon as there is a recurrence of a concern.
 - when a child on the Child Protection Register leaves the setting, information will be transferred to the new setting or school immediately. Agencies involved will also be informed.
 - monitoring children's welfare, keeping records and seeking advice or making a referral to other agencies, e.g. Children's Social Care, when necessary.

Promoting a Protective Ethos

The setting will create an ethos in which children feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, they are encouraged to talk, and they are listened to. We will seek to achieve this in the following ways:

- All staff, including the DSLs, are trained regularly to ensure skills and knowledge are up to date.
- Staff know how to respond to Child Protection concerns.
- Contribution to an inter-agency approach to child protection by working effectively and supportively with other agencies.
- Raising children's awareness and actively promoting self-esteem building, so that children have a range of strategies and contacts to ensure their safety.
- Using personal safety programmes, such as Protective Behaviours and the NSPCC PANTS campaign.
- Working with parents/carers to build an understanding of the setting's responsibility to the welfare of the children.
- Ensuring the relevant policies are in place, i.e., the use of mobile phones and cameras, behaviour management, intimate care, whistleblowing, social networking.
- Being vigilant to the inappropriate behaviour of staff or adults working with children and ensuring that all staff and volunteers know the allegations procedure and this is actively supported within the setting.
- Staff acting as positive role models to children and young people.
- Ensuring staff are aware of the need to maintain appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationships with children and parents/carers in line with our setting's staff code of conduct/behaviour policy.
- Ensuring the DSLs keeps themselves up to date with safeguarding concerns in the local area and disseminates this to the staff as relevant.

Support To Families

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the setting.
- We make clear to parents/carers 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 care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- We will engage with any Child in Need plan or Early Help plan as agreed.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents/carers 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 Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Attendance and Absence

We take steps to ensure that children are kept safe, that their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss their entitlements and opportunities. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family.

There are several reasons why a child may be absent from playgroup. In most cases it is reasonable to expect that

parents/carers alert us as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice. Parents/carers are advised that they should contact the playgroup within one hour of the time the child would have been expected to advise of their absence. DSLs must also adhere to Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP) requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from the provision.

- If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents/carers, then either the DSL, Keyworker or Preschool Leader, takes immediate action to contact them to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well.
- Attempts to contact the child's parents/carers or other named carers continue throughout the day on the first day of absence.
- If no contact is made with the parents/carers and there is no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through a named contact on the child's Admission form, this is recorded as an unexplained absence on the child's personal file and is followed up by the Preschool Leader/DSL each day until contact is made.
- If contact has not been made within three working days, children's services will be contacted for advice about making a referral. Other relevant services may be contacted as per LSP procedures.
- All absences are recorded on the child's personal file with the reason given for the absence, the expected duration and any follow up action taken or required with timescales.
- Absence records are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

If at any time further information becomes known that gives cause for concern, the procedure for safeguarding or child protection concerns is immediately followed.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

- The DSL, Preschool Leader or Key Person attempts to contact the parents/carers to establish why the child is absent. If contact is made and a valid reason given, the information is recorded in the child's file.
- Any relevant professionals involved with the child are informed, e.g. social worker/family support worker.
- If contact is made and the DSL is concerned that the child is at risk, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately. The events, conversation and follow-up actions are recorded. If contact cannot be made, the designated person contacts the relevant professionals and informs them of the situation.
- If the child has current involvement with social care, the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- If at any time information becomes known that gives cause for concern, the Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures are followed immediately.

Safeguarding

- If a child misses three consecutive sessions and it has not been possible to make contact, the designated person calls Social Care and makes a referral if advised.
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a child protection plan in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the designated person attempts to contact the child's parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made, the child's absence is logged, Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.

Poor/Irregular Attendance

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- Firstly, the Preschool Leader/DSL should discuss a child's attendance with their parents/carers to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parents/carers to offer support where possible.
- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the Preschool Leader/DSL must review the situation and decide if a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.

In the case of funded children, the local authority may use their discretion, where absence is recurring or for extended periods, considering the reason for the absence and impact on the setting. The Preschool Leader/DSL is aware of the local authority policy on reclaiming refunds when a child is absent from a setting.

Understanding Barriers To Attendance

- Whilst a child may occasionally be too unwell to attend, sometimes this may cause a reluctance to return. We will try to resolve any barriers preventing attendance with parent/carers, and the child (where appropriate). If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend, we will work with the family to understand the reason and provide any necessary support. All agencies who work with children have a duty to support the Local Authority in ensuring all children are safe and looked after appropriately.
- It is our responsibility to work with the Local Authority, by making referrals as we feel is necessary and appropriate.
- We recognise that poor attendance could be an indication of difficulties in a child's life and their lived experience. This may be related to problems at home or in playgroup. We encourage parents/carers to inform us of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour. This can help identify any additional early help they may require. Safeguarding is a priority, concerns for any child at any time will be reported to the DSLs.
- Some children are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance. We may follow up on a child's non-attendance and gather information about the child to prevent non-attendance developing and to monitor support.

Absence Procedures

- If a child is not attending playgroup for any reason, parent/carer(s) must notify the playgroup as soon as possible and within 1 hour of the time the child is due at the setting, through ClassDojo, by phone, text or email.

- We provide holiday forms in the playgroup, which should be completed in advance.
- We will keep a record of non-attendance and of our contact attempts.
- If there is no contact after one week a home visit may be complete and/or a letter sent to the child's family.
- We may also make a home visit if there are continued absences, even if contact has been made and reasons given.
- If contact cannot be made through phone calls and home visits, under our duty of care we may refer to outside agencies based on safeguarding concerns.
- If after one month the child has not attended playgroup and a reasonable reason has not been shared, the child's place could be assessed, and where appropriate may be withdrawn and allocated to another child on the waiting list.
- If funding is claimed for the child's place, long or regular absences may affect entitlement.
- When staff complete home visits, if they cannot make contact with parent/carers or the child, then they have the right to ask neighbours if they have seen them. This is to ensure the child's safety. No personal details will be shared and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- We will support families and try to find a way to help and support attendance.
- We will action/support a plan to address any barriers to attendance.
- We can and will contact outside agencies, if it is felt that this support is needed to help improve attendance for the child.

Whistleblowing

Chestnut Playgroup has a separate Whistleblowing Policy which aims to help and protect both staff and children by:

- ✦ Preventing a problem getting worse
- ✦ Safeguarding children and young people
- ✦ Reducing the potential risks to others

The earlier a concern is raised, the easier and sooner Chestnut Playgroup can take action. The responsibility for expressing concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour rests with all staff, students and volunteers. Chestnut Playgroup will ensure that any disciplinary proceedings against staff relating to Child Protection matters are concluded in full even when the member of staff is no longer employed at the setting and that notification of any concerns is made to the relevant agencies, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and included in references where applicable. For further information, refer to our safer recruitment policy.

Allegation Against A Person Who Works Or Volunteers With Children

An allegation may relate to a person who works or volunteers with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

If an allegation is made against a person who works or volunteers with children, the following action will be taken (refer to: 'Allegation against a person who works or volunteers with children' flowchart and guidance):

- ✦ Chestnut Playgroup will ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- ✦ Chestnut Playgroup will **not** start to investigate but will immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01223 727967.
- ✦ If the LADO decides the matter is a child protection case, external/internal agencies (e.g., police) will be informed by the LADO and Chestnut Playgroup will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised.
- ✦ Chestnut Playgroup will notify Ofsted of a significant event
- ✦ It may be necessary for the employer to suspend the alleged perpetrator. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
- ✦ If it is agreed that the matter is not a child protection case, Chestnut Playgroup will investigate the matter themselves, gaining advice from the Committee and our Early Years advisor, where relevant.

Legal Framework *Primary Legislation*

- Children Act 1989 – s 47
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 2004 s11
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Equalities Act (2006)
- Equalities Act (2010)
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Freedom of Information Act (2000)

Further Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HMG 2018)
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021
- What to Do if You're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG 2015)
- Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales: guidance for specified authorities in England and Wales on the duty of schools and other providers in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' (HMG 2015)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018
- Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted 2019)

- The framework for the assessment of children in need and their families (DoH 2000)
 - The Common Assessment Framework (2006)
 - Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (DfE 2015)
 - Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (DfE 2018)
 - The Team Around the Child (TAC) and the Lead Professional (CWDC 2009)
 - The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) – guide for practitioners (CWDC 2010)
 - The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) – guide for managers (CWDC 2010)
 - Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (HMG. 2016)
 - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) (Ministry of Justice, National Offender Management Service and HM Prison Service 2014)
 - Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession (HMG 200)
 - Safeguarding Children in whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced (HMG 2007)
 - Safeguarding Disabled Children: Practice Guidance (DfE 2009)
 - Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked (DfE and Home Office 2011)
 - Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners (DfE 2017)
 - Handling Cases of Forced Marriage: Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines (HMG 2014)
- * A 'young person' is defined as 16 to 19 years old – in our setting they may be a student, worker, volunteer or parent/carer. A 'vulnerable adult' is defined as a person 'who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (No Secrets DoH 2015).

Policy adopted: September 2011

Last reviewed: March 2025

Signed:

Name: Emily Steele

Position: Chair

