

Child Protection - Policies and Procedures

Introduction

The Mews Nursery and Playclub (thereafter referred to as the centre) complies with the procedures approved by Ofsted and our local Bath and North East Somerset council. We intend to create in our centre an environment in which children are safe from abuse and in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to. In order to achieve this we will:

Exclude known abusers

It will be made clear to applicants for posts that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

All applicants for work, whether voluntary or paid, will be interviewed before an appointment is made and will be asked to provide two references. All such references will be followed up. In the case of applicants with unexplained gaps in their employment history, or who have moved rapidly from one job to another, explanations will be sought.

All appointments, both paid and voluntary, will be subject to a three-month probationary period and will not be confirmed unless the Centre Manager and the Senior Co-ordinators are confident that the applicant can be safely entrusted with children. Confirmation of appointment will only be given when there has been a staff review between the centre manager and a senior co-ordinator. Probationary periods can be extended if there is any doubt about the person so that further investigations can take place. The appointee will be informed in writing that the probationary period has been extended and the reason for this.

Seek and supply training

We will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the group to ensure that they recognise the symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

Our Child Protection representative will attend appropriate courses, and cascade information to members of staff at inset days, and additionally will check this policy document to ensure it complies with the latest information available.

Prevent abuse by means of good practice

Adults will not be left alone for long periods with individual children or with small groups. An adult who needs to take a child aside - for example, for time out after behaviour, which needs improvement - will leave the door ajar.

Adults who have not been registered as "fit" persons will not take children unaccompanied to the toilet.

Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence through adult support in making choices and in finding names for their own feelings and acceptable ways to express them. This will enable children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.

The layout of the playroom(s) will permit constant supervision of all children.

Respond appropriately to suspicions of abuse

The first concern will be the child. Children whose condition or behaviour has given cause for concern will be listened to, reassured and helped to understand that they themselves are valued and respected and have not been at fault.

Changes in children's behaviour/appearance will be investigated.

Parents will normally be the first point of reference, but if they are not in a position to allay any legitimate anxieties, the matter will also be taken up with the Social Services Department.

In exceptional circumstances, the Social Services Department may be the first point of reference.

All such suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential, shared only with those who need to know. The people most commonly involved will be the member of staff/key-worker reporting the incident, the Senior Co-ordinators and the Centre manager.

If a volunteer or member of staff is accused of any form of child abuse, s/he will be interviewed immediately by the person in charge of the group. The person accused may choose to attend the interview accompanied by a friend or colleague and to seek advice from a union representative. The interview will usually be with a senior co-ordinator, but if the allegation is against a co-ordinator, the interview may be conducted by the Centre manager or committee chair. The person against whom the allegation is made will be informed of the allegation and will immediately be suspended on full pay while an investigation is made. Investigations will be in line with Area Child Protection Committee procedures and conducted in conjunction with the Area Child Protection Committee. Confidential records will be kept of the allegation and of all subsequent proceedings.

Keep records

Whenever worrying changes are observed in a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance, a specific and confidential record will be set up, quite separate from the usual on-going records of children's progress and development. The record will include, in addition to the name, address and age of the child: timed and dated observations, describing objectively the child's behaviour/appearance, without comment or interpretation; where possible, the exact words spoken by the child; the dated name and signature of the recorder.

Such records will be kept in a separate file and will not be accessible to people other than the Senior Co-ordinators, chair and keyworker or other member of staff as appropriate.

Liaise with other bodies

The nursery and playclub operates in accordance with guidelines laid down by the registering authority. Confidential records kept on children about whom the pre-school is

anxious will be shared with the Social Services Department if the pre-school feels that adequate explanations for changes in the child's condition have not been provided.

The group will maintain ongoing contact with the registering authority, together with names, addresses and telephone numbers of individual social workers, to ensure that it would be easy, in any emergency, for the pre-school and the Social Services Department to work well together.

Records will also be kept of the local NSPCC contact, or other contact(s) as appropriate.

Support families

The Nursery and Playclub will take every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relationships between families and staff and volunteers in the group.

Where abuse at home is suspected, the centre will continue to welcome the child and family while investigations proceed.

Confidential records kept on a child will be shared with parents.

With the proviso that the care and safety of the child must always be paramount, the centre will do all in its power to support and work with the child's family.

Parents and Guardians will be informed of our procedures in the parents guides of both the nursery and the playclub.