



7. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy

Aim

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults and will do this by putting children, young people and vulnerable adult's right to be '*strong, resilient and listened to*' at the heart of all our activities.

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1. Introduction

'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential.'

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

This policy is for our supervisor, parents/ carers management committee, staff, parents/carers, volunteers, and the wider pre-school community. It forms part of the safeguarding arrangements for our pre-school and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (DfE, 2025);
- our Behaviour Policy, and:
- our Staff Code of Conduct
- our Attendance Policy

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (*everyone under the age of 18*) is defined in Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025), as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

We follow a whole-setting approach to safeguarding, which ensures that keeping children safe is at the heart of everything we do, and underpins all systems, processes, and policies. It is important that our values are understood and shared by all children, staff, parents/carers, volunteers, and the wider pre-school community. Only by working in partnership, can we truly keep children safe.

Ducklings must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well by –

- Safeguarding children
- Ensuring the people who have contact with children are suitable
- Promoting good health
- Supporting and understanding behaviour
- Maintaining record, policies and procedures

2. Statutory framework

There is government guidance set out in Working Together (DfE, 2023) on how agencies must work in partnership to keep children safe. This guidance places a shared and equal duty on three Safeguarding Partners (the Local Authority, Police and Health) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area under multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. These arrangements sit under the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB). In Essex, the statutory partners are Essex County Council, Essex Police, and three NHS Integrated Care Boards covering the county.

Ducklings Pre-School have a duty under section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006 to comply with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, under which we are required to take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of young children.

In addition to national statutory guidance, in Essex, all professionals must work in accordance with the SET Procedures.

Our pre-school also works in accordance with the following legislation and guidance (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (DfE, 2025)
- Working together (DfE, 2023)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (HMG, 2015)
- The Prevent Duty guidance (Home Office, 2015)
- Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB, 2024)
- Understanding and supporting behaviour - Safe practice for schools (Essex County Council)
- Children Act (HMG, 1989)
- Children Act (HMG, 2004)
- Children Act (HMG, 2006)
- Children and Social Work Act (HMG, 2017)
- Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

3. Roles and responsibilities

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them and to provide a safe environment in which they can learn and achieve their full potential. However, there are key people within settings and the Local Authority who have specific responsibilities under child protection procedures. The names of those in our pre-school with these specific responsibilities Our designated safeguarding lead who co-ordinates child, young person and vulnerable adult protection issues is - Julie Cook.

When the pre-school is open, but the designated person is not on site, a suitably trained deputy is available at all times for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns. Our deputy designated safeguarding lead is – Jo Jacobs.

However, we are clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play.

The management committee

Our designated officer is – Ken Yap (Chairperson of the parent’s management committee) who has strategic oversight of our safeguarding arrangements. It ensures that these arrangements operate effectively, as follows:

- we have appropriate policies in place;
- our staff receive the right training to keep children safe, including regular safeguarding and child protection updates, at least annually, to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to keep our children safe;
- we have a named designated safeguarding lead who takes lead responsibility for safeguarding children, and a deputy designated safeguarding lead to provide cover when the designated safeguarding lead is absent;
- all adults in our pre-school who work with children undergo safeguarding and child protection training at induction as appropriate, which is regularly updated;
- our pre-school contributes to inter-agency working, in line with statutory and local guidance;
- information is shared and stored appropriately and in accordance with statutory requirements;
- we have safer recruitment and selection procedures in place that help to deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children;
- we meet statutory responsibilities to check adults working with children;
- ensuring volunteers are appropriately supervised in the pre-school, as appropriate.

The designated safeguarding lead

Our designated safeguarding lead is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, including Essex Social Care and other agencies as required. The designated safeguarding lead provides support, advice, and guidance to staff on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issues as required.

Our designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead attend a child protection training course to enable them to identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of possible abuse and neglect. They also ensure that everyone in our pre-school (including temporary staff, volunteers, visitors, and contractors) is aware of our child protection procedures and that they are followed at all times.

All staff

Everyone in our pre-school has a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which our children can learn. We recognise that any child may benefit from early help and all our staff members are aware of the Essex Early Help procedures and our role in it. They are aware of signs of abuse and neglect so they are able to identify children who may need help or protection.

All staff members are aware of and follow our procedures (as set out in this policy) and are aware of how to make a request for support to Essex Social Care if there is a need to do so. Staff understand that, if they have any concerns about a child’s welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the designated safeguarding lead or deputy designated safeguarding lead practitioner – they do not assume that others have taken action.

Our staff understand that children may not always feel able or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, perhaps due to their age, or because they are embarrassed, or they may not always recognise that they are being abused. We recognise there are many factors which may impact on our children's welfare and safety and understand safeguarding in the wider context (contextual safeguarding). We also understand that abuse, neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely 'stand-alone' events and that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap.

Our staff will always reassure children who report abuse/victims of abuse that they are taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. We will never make a child feel ashamed for reporting abuse, nor make them feel they are causing a problem.

4. Types of abuse/specific safeguarding issues

Information about abuse and harm including examples of specific safeguarding issues is set out below. Further information about types of abuse and harm is given in:

- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners (HMG, 2015); and
- Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2025).

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. A child may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children – the four categories of abuse are:

- *Physical - may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent/carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.*
- *Emotional - the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.*
- *Sexual - forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.*
- *Neglect - persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.*

Harmful sexual behaviour

It is normal for some children to display sexualised behaviour towards other children as they develop. However, harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children, and which may be harmful or abusive (derived from Hackett, 2014). It may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour. HSB encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards

younger children, peers, older children, or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as those it is directed towards.

We understand that, if a child's sexual behaviour is not developmentally appropriate or expected for their age, it is important to respond quickly, before the behaviour becomes harmful to that child or other children. We recognise HSB may also be a sign that a child has suffered their own trauma or abuse and we will respond to ensure they receive the right help at the right time to address the concerning behaviour.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another and can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or financial abuse.

Being exposed to domestic abuse in childhood is child abuse and can have a significant and lasting impact. Children may experience domestic abuse directly, but they can also experience it indirectly. Either can have a serious effect on a child's behaviour, brain development and overall wellbeing, and also compromise the child's basic need for safety and security.

In Essex, the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) is responsible for designing and implementing the Domestic Abuse Strategy and provides advice, guidance and resources to support work around domestic abuse.

Risk in the community

We understand that safeguarding incidents and behaviours can be associated with factors outside a child's home or setting, and that there are risks that exist in the community. All staff are aware of contextual safeguarding, and we are therefore mindful of whether wider environmental factors present in a child's life are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. We always consider relevant information when assessing any risk to a child and will share it with other agencies when appropriate, to support better understanding of a child and their family. This is to ensure that our children and families receive the right help at the right time.

Emotional wellbeing

Children's personal, social, and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for them to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. We understand that a child's positive wellbeing is vital, and that poor wellbeing can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. We recognise that where children have suffered abuse or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

Prevention of radicalisation

Children can be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism in the same way they are vulnerable to other safeguarding issues. Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025) defines the following:

Extremism - the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.

Radicalisation - refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

Terrorism - an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015) placed a duty on childcare providers and schools. Under section 26 of the Act, childcare providers and schools are required, in the exercise of their functions, to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This duty is known as the Prevent Duty.

Channel is a national programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people identified as vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals may be passed to a multi-agency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from an educational setting may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment. An individual's engagement with the programme is entirely voluntary at all stages.

So-called 'Honour Based Abuse'

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast flattening.

Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

Female Genital Mutilation

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Information about FGM is available on the National FGM Centre website.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices as a way to coerce a person into marriage.

The Forced Marriage Unit has published statutory guidance and multi-agency guidelines, which are available on the GOV.UK website. The Forced Marriage Unit can also provide advice and information: call 020 7008 0151 or email fmufcdo.gov.uk.

Breast Flattening

Breast flattening is the process during which young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.

Information about breast flattening is also available on the National FGM Centre website.

5. Children potentially at greater risk of harm

We recognise that some children may potentially be at greater risk of harm and require additional help and support. These may be children with a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, those in care or previously in care or those requiring wellbeing support. We work with Social Care and other appropriate agencies to ensure there is a joined-up approach to planning for these children and that they receive the right help at the right time.

At our pre-school we also understand that children with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability, without further exploration.
- that they may be more prone to peer group isolation than others
- the potential to be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying, without outwardly showing signs.
- communication difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

We recognise that children with SEND may require additional help and support to ensure they are appropriately safeguarded.

6. Procedures

Our pre-school works with key local partners to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified and

contributing to inter-agency plans which provide additional support (through a Child In Need or a Child Protection plan).

All staff members have a duty to identify and respond to suspected/actual abuse or disclosures of abuse. Any member of staff, volunteer or visitor to the setting who receives a disclosure or allegation of abuse, or suspects that abuse may have occurred, must report it immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (or, in their absence, the deputy designated safeguarding lead practitioner).

All action is taken in accordance with the following guidance:

- Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidelines - the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Protection Procedures (ESCB, 2025)
- Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (DfE, 2025)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2023)
- 'Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex' (ESCB)
- PREVENT Duty - Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)

Where there is risk of immediate harm, concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and/or the Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via Essex Effective Support. The pre-school may also seek advice from Essex Social Care or another appropriate agency about a concern if we are unsure how to respond to it.

Wherever possible, we will share any safeguarding concerns, or an intention to refer a child to Children's Social Care, with parents/carers. However, we will not do so where it is felt that to do so could place a child at greater risk of harm or impede a criminal investigation. If it is necessary for another agency to meet with a child in the setting, we will always seek to inform parents or carers, unless we are advised not to by that agency. On occasions, it may be necessary to consult with the Children and Families Hub and/or Essex Police for advice on when to share information with parents/carers.

All staff understand that, if they continue to have concerns about a child, or feel a concern is not being addressed or does not appear to be improving, they should press for re-consideration of the case with the designated safeguarding lead.

If, for any reason, the designated safeguarding lead or deputy designated safeguarding lead is not immediately available, this will not delay any appropriate action being taken. Safeguarding contact details are displayed in our pre-school to ensure that all staff members have access to urgent safeguarding support, should it be required. Any individual may refer to Social Care where there is suspected or actual risk of harm to a child.

When new staff, volunteers or regular visitors join our pre-school they are informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead and how to share concerns with them.

7. Working with other partners to keep children safe

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure our pre-school is represented at, and that a report is submitted to, any statutory meeting called for children at our setting or previously known to us. Where possible and appropriate, any report will be shared in advance with parent(s)/carer(s). The member of staff attending the meeting will be fully briefed on any issues or concerns the setting has and be prepared to contribute to the discussions.

If a child is subject to a Care, Child Protection or a Child in Need plan, the designated safeguarding lead will ensure the child is monitored regarding their attendance, emotional wellbeing, EYFS progress, welfare, and presentation. If the pre-school is part of the core group, the designated safeguarding lead will ensure the setting is represented, provides appropriate information, and contributes to the plan at these meetings. Any concerns about the Child Protection plan and/or the child's welfare will be discussed and recorded at the core group meeting, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of significant harm. In this case the designated safeguarding lead will inform the child's key person immediately and then record that they have done so, and the actions agreed.

8. Training

The designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead practitioners undertake level 3 child protection training every two years. All the staff receive appropriate child protection training at least annually, in line with ESCB expectations.

In addition, all staff and other adults working with children in our pre-school receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required, but at least annually, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively. Records of any child protection training undertaken are kept for all staff.

9. Information sharing and confidentiality

Sharing information is a key part of safeguarding work and decisions about how much information to share, with whom and when, can have a profound impact on a child's life. Effective information sharing can help to ensure that a child receives the right help at the right time and can prevent a concern from becoming more serious and difficult to address.

Where there are concerns about the safety of a child, the sharing of information in a timely and effective manner between organisations can reduce the risk of harm. Whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 places duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully, it is not a barrier to sharing information, where the failure to do so would result in a child or vulnerable adult being placed at risk of harm. Similarly, human rights concerns, such as respecting the right to a private and family life, would not prevent sharing information where there are real safeguarding concerns. Fears about sharing information cannot (and will not) stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect.

Our staff will never guarantee confidentiality to anyone (including parents/carers, or children) about a safeguarding concern, nor promise to keep a secret. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the designated safeguarding lead (or Deputy) and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities.

Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the designated safeguarding lead (or Deputy) with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

Where a child is attending another setting at the same time as attending ours, we may, where appropriate, link with the other setting. Wherever possible, we will inform parents/carers of our intention to do this, unless to do so would place the child at further risk.

10. Child protection records

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Our pre-school is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our pre-school and when these records should be shared with other agencies.

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse or noticing signs or indicators of abuse will record it as soon as possible, using a safeguarding incident reporting form, noting what was said or seen (if appropriate, using a body map to record), giving the date, time, and location. All records will be dated and signed and will include the action taken. This is then presented to the designated safeguarding lead practitioner or deputy safeguarding lead, who will decide on appropriate action and record this accordingly.

Any records relating to child protection are kept in an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to any other child file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially until the child transfers to another educational setting.

Where a child transfers from our pre-school to another setting or school, their child protection records will be forwarded to the new educational setting. These will be marked 'Confidential' and for the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Lead practitioner at the new setting or school, with a return address on the envelope so it can be returned to us if it goes astray. We will obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received by the new setting, and then destroy any copies held in our pre-school. Where appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead practitioner may also contact the new setting in advance of the child's move there, to enable planning so appropriate support is in place when the child arrives.

Where a child joins our pre-school, we will request child protection records from the previous educational setting (if applicable, and if none are received).

Where a child is attending another setting at the same time as our, we will share any child protection records where appropriate and where it is in the best interests of the child. We will link with other settings when there is a need to do so and we will be transparent with parents when we do so (unless to do so would place a child at further risk of harm).

11. Allegations about members of the workforce

All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct. These matters form part of staff induction and are outlined in our Staff Code of Conduct. All staff are regularly reminded of this through updates and training and are informed about whistleblowing policy.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2025) and the SET procedures (ESCB 2025) sets out the procedures in respect of allegations against an adult working with children (in a paid or voluntary capacity). These procedures should be followed where an adult has:

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

Any concerns about an adult in our pre-school should be reported to the supervisor or deputy supervisor who will decide how to take this forward. In some cases, it might not be clear whether an incident constitutes an allegation. If this is the case, it will be necessary for us to explore the concerns to establish some facts- this initial fact-finding is not an investigation, it is to clarify information and to direct our response to the concern raised.

Where an allegation against a member of staff is received, and it is felt that any of the above criteria apply, the SET procedures (ESCB, 2025) require this to be reported to the duty Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at Essex Workforce Allegations Team at LADO@essex.gov.uk. This should be done by the supervisor or deputy supervisor within one working day (or sooner on 03330 139797 **if immediate safeguarding is required**). Where the concern is about the supervisor, it should be reported to the chairperson of the parents management committee.

In accordance with the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (DfE, 2021), we will also inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere). We will also notify Ofsted of the action taken in respect of the allegations. We will make these notifications as soon as reasonably practicable, but within 14 days of the allegations being made. We are aware that not complying with these requirements without reasonable excuse is committing an offence.

Staffing matters are confidential, and the pre-school operates within a statutory framework around Data Protection. We do not share information about any individual staff member with anyone other than any appropriate statutory agency.

12. Physical intervention and use of reasonable force

Our Behaviour Policy sets out our approach to behaviour for all children and also for those with more challenging or harmful behaviour. We recognise there are some children who have needs that require additional support and

a more personalised approach and we always consider all behaviour, and our response to it, in the context of safeguarding.

There are occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with children, this may include:

- to comfort a child in distress (*appropriate to their age and individual specific needs identified through a risk assessment*);
- to direct a child;
- for curricular reasons (*for example during physical activity, or when we are using music*);
- in an emergency, to avert danger to the child or others.

The term 'reasonable force' covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff to use reasonable force to safeguard children, such as guiding a child to safety. 'Reasonable' means using no more force than is needed. Our pre-school works in accordance with statutory and local guidance on the use of reasonable force and recognises that where intervention is required, it should always be considered in a safeguarding context.

13. Whistleblowing

All members of staff and the wider pre-school community should be able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously by the leadership team. We have 'whistleblowing' procedures in place, and these are available in our Whistleblowing Policy. However, for any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, or where they feel their concerns have not been addressed, they may contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline on: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or by email at: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Parents/carers or others in the wider setting community with concerns can contact the NSPCC general helpline on 0808 800 5000 (24-hour helpline) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

14. Online Safety

Technology forms part of the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage; computer skills are key to accessing learning. All staff in our pre-school are aware of the risks to children online, and understand that any child can be vulnerable, and that their vulnerability can vary according to age, developmental stage, and personal circumstances. We help our children to begin to learn how to use technology safely, and to be safe online. We will engage with our parents/carers about online safety to support them in keeping their children safe at home when using technology.

15. Use of mobile phones

We acknowledge that mobile phones are often the only means of contact available and can be helpful in supporting safeguarding arrangements in settings, including when on outings. In our pre-school, when mobile phones are used, this is underpinned by a risk assessment and operated within a clear framework, so everyone understands their responsibilities in ensuring phones are used safely.

We will ensure that staff's personal mobiles and smart watches:

- are stored securely in the lockers upstairs in the office and will be switched off or on silent whilst staff are on duty;
- are not used to take pictures of any children attending the pre-school;
- are not used to take photographs, video, or audio recordings in our pre-school;
- are not used to contact parents/carers or children except in the event of an emergency; and
- are not used by visitors.

16. Use of iPads, photography and images

Most people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for acceptable reasons. However, due to cases of abuse to children through taking or using images, we must ensure that we have safeguards in place.

To keep our children safe, we will:

- always obtain consent from parents/carers for photographs or video recordings to be taken, used, or published (for example, in the photo albums and on Tapestry);
- ensure only the setting's designated iPads are used when photographing or videoing children;
- ensure that children are appropriately dressed if photographs or videos are to be taken;
- ensure that children's names are not displayed alongside any photographs in a public space;
- ensure that personal devices including cameras, mobile phones, tablets, smart watches, or other such technology are not used to take photographs, video, or audio recordings in our pre-school without prior explicit written consent from the supervisor;
- ensure that all images are stored securely and in accordance with statutory guidance;
- ensure where professional photographers are used that the appropriate checks, such as those with the Disclosure and Barring Service, references and parental consent is obtained prior to photographs being taken.

17. Attendance

Whilst there is no legal requirement for children to attend a setting before the term after their fifth birthday, we understand the importance of good attendance at our pre-school as a protective factor and also to support the development and wellbeing of our children. Repeated and unexplained absence from the pre-school can be a concern for a number of reasons:

- it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.
- it can significantly impact on a child's progress and/or wellbeing.

In accordance with our Attendance Policy and as part of safeguarding and Health and Safety procedures, we keep a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance. This data is used to identify patterns of absence as they emerge, to ensure any concerns are identified and addressed at an early stage. We also have procedures to follow up on absence from our pre-school and may work with other relevant agencies where it is appropriate to do so, or where we have concerns about a child.

Concern for a child or young person and their family As concerns emerge

✓ In agency/organisation/education setting based meeting with the family

Consultation opportunities

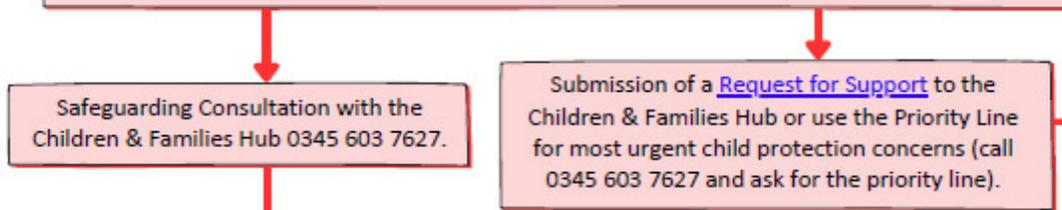
- ✓ Consultation with your organisation's designated safeguarding person/safeguarding lead
 - ✓ TAFSO@essex.gov.uk
 - ✓ [Early Help Drop-ins](#) – (link will take you to days, time and joining info)
 - ✓ SET CAMHS Professional Consultation Line available Mon-Thurs 10am-midday. Tel: 0300 300 1996 - professionals only
- * Always record your concern and outcome of any consultation *

Further resources available

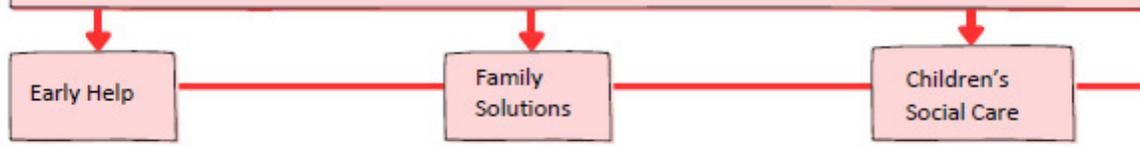
- ✓ Review your concerns against the [Indicators of need](#) (within the Effective Support document)
- ✓ Find a service in the [Essex Directory of Services](#) or [Frontline](#)
- ✓ SEND needs [Essex Local Offer](#) or SEND [Information, Advice & Support](#)
- ✓ [Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service](#)
- ✓ [Early Help plan template](#)

Safeguarding concerns for child, young person and their family

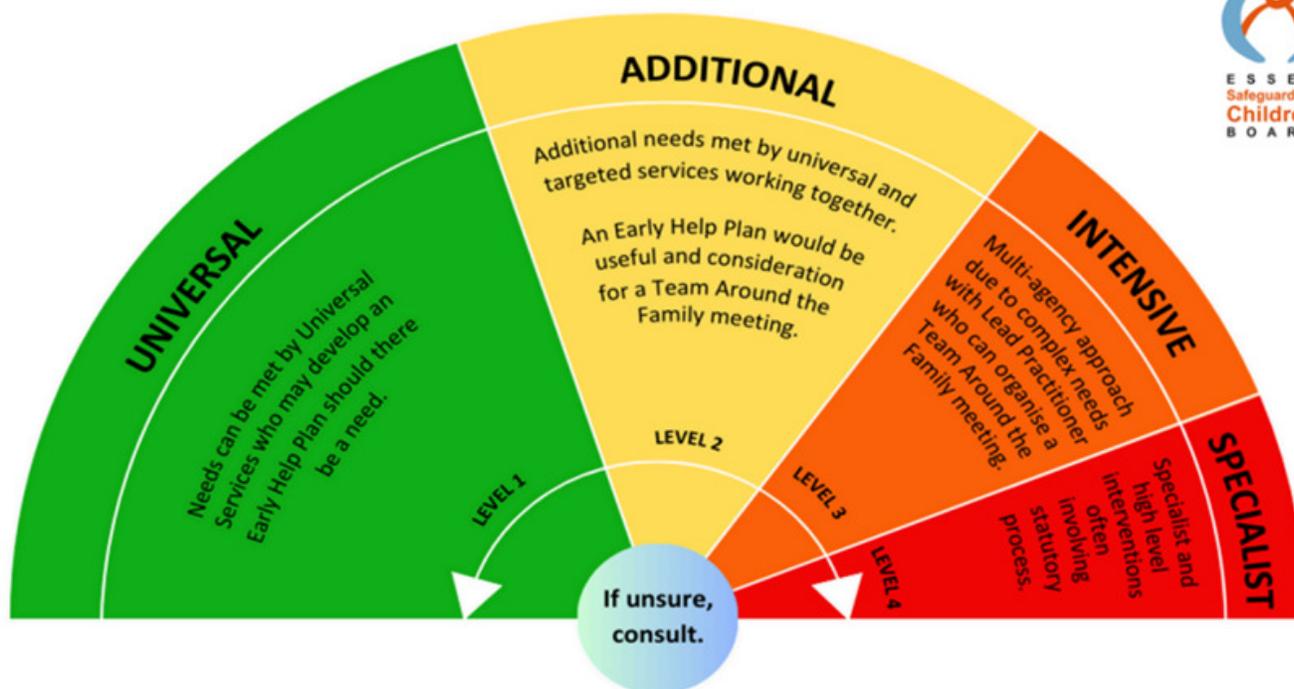
Consultation with your organisation's designated safeguarding person/safeguarding lead.



The Children and Families Hub triage the information shared and make a decision about level of need.
For those Requests for Support that do not require a Family Solutions or Children's Social Care intervention, the referrer will receive feedback explaining the rationale for the decision.



The Effective Support Windscreen



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Children with Additional needs are best supported by those who already work with them, such as Family Hubs or schools and other educational settings, organising additional support with local partners as needed. When an agency is supporting these children, an Early Help Plan and a Lead Professional are helpful to share information and co-ordinate work alongside the child and family.

For children whose needs are Intensive, a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach is usually best, involving either an Early Help Plan or a Shared Family Assessment (SFA), with a Lead Professional to work closely with the child and family to ensure they receive all the support they require. Examples of intensive services are children's mental health services and Family Solutions.

Specialist services are where the needs of the child are so great that statutory and/or specialist intervention is required to keep them safe or to ensure their continued development. Examples of specialist services are Essex Social Care or Youth Offending Service. By working together effectively with children that have additional needs and by providing coordinated multi-disciplinary/agency support and services for those with intensive needs, we seek to prevent more children and young people requiring statutory interventions and reactive specialist services.

Appendix C: Signs and symptoms of abuse

Signs of possible abuse

- **Physical** - children with frequent injuries, unexplained or unusual fractures/broken bones, unexplained bruises, or cuts; burns or scalds; or bite marks.
- **Emotional** - children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong; parents/carers who withdraw attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder'; parents/carers blaming their problems on their child; parents/carers who humiliate their child (eg, name-calling/making negative comparisons)
- **Sexual** - children who display knowledge/interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age; children who use sexual language/have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have; children who ask others to behave sexually/play sexual games; children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections/underage pregnancy.
- **Neglect** - children living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe; children who are hungry or dirty; children without adequate clothing (eg: not having a winter coat, shoes); children living in dangerous conditions (eg: around drugs, alcohol or violence); children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm; children who fail to receive basic health care; parents/carers who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured.

This safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy was adopted by	NGCA Ducklings pre-school
On	29 th September 2025
Signed on behalf of the management committee	
Name of signatory	Ken Yap
Role of signatory	Chairperson



7.a. Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns

The designated safeguarding lead is Julie Cook, the deputy designated safeguarding lead is Jo Jacobs, the designated officer is Ken Yap.

Safeguarding roles

- All staff recognise and know how to respond to signs and symptoms that may indicate a child is suffering from or likely to be suffering from harm. They understand that they have a responsibility to act immediately by discussing their concerns with the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy designated safeguarding lead.
- The supervisor and deputy supervisor are the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead, responsible for co-ordinating action taken by the pre-school to safeguard vulnerable children and adults. The designated safeguarding lead is also responsible for liaising with local statutory children's services and with the Local Safeguarding Partnership.
- All concerns about the welfare of children in Ducklings pre-school at home or elsewhere should be reported to the designated safeguarding lead or the deputy designated safeguarding lead in their absence.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all educators at Ducklings pre-school are alert to the indicators of abuse and neglect and understand how to identify and respond to these.
- The pre-school will not operate without an identified designated safeguarding lead at any time.
- The line manager Ken Yap, of the designated safeguarding lead is the designated officer.
- The designated safeguarding lead informs the designated officer about serious concerns as soon as they arise and agree the action to be taken, seeking further clarification if there are any doubts that the issue is safeguarding.
- If it is not possible to contact the designated officer, action to safeguard the child is taken first and the designated officer is informed later. If the designated officer is unavailable advice is sought from our Ofsted representative.
- Issues which may require notifying to Ofsted are notified to our Ofsted representative to make a decision regarding notification. The designated safeguarding lead, designated officer and our Ofsted representative must remain up to date with Ofsted reporting and notification requirements.
- If there is an incident, which may require reporting to RIDDOR the designated officer immediately seeks guidance from the parents committee and hall management as appropriate. There continues to be a

requirement that the designated officer follows legislative requirements in relation to reporting to RIDDOR. This is fully addressed in the Health and Safety procedures.

- Ducklings pre-school follow the procedures of our Children and Families Service and Essex County Council Safeguarding team for safeguarding and any specific safeguarding procedures such as responding to radicalisation/extremism concerns. Procedures are followed for managing allegations against staff, as well as for responding to concerns and complaints raised about quality or practice issues, whistle-blowing and escalation.

Responding to marks or injuries observed

- If a member of staff at Ducklings pre-school observes or is informed by a parent/carer of a mark or injury to a child that happened at home or elsewhere, the member of staff asks the parent/carer to complete a pre-existing injury form and sign it, the member of staff signs it and files it in the child's personal file.
- The member of staff advises the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible if there are safeguarding concerns about the circumstance of the injury.
- If there are concerns about the circumstances or explanation given, by the parent/carer and/or child, the designated safeguarding lead decides the course of action to be taken after reviewing the Pre-existing injury form and completing a Safeguarding incident reporting form.
- If the mark or injury is noticed later in the day and the parent is not present, this is raised with the designated safeguarding lead.
- If there are concerns about the nature of the injury, and it is unlikely to have occurred at the pre-school, the designated safeguarding lead decides the course of action required and a Safeguarding incident reporting form is completed as above, taking into consideration any explanation given by the child.
- If there is a likelihood that the injury is recent and occurred at the pre-school, this is raised with the designated safeguarding lead.
- If there is no cause for further concern, a record is made in the Accident Record, with a note that the circumstances of the injury are not known.
- If the injury is unlikely to have occurred at pre-school, this is raised with the designated safeguarding lead who informs the designated officer.
- The parent/carer is advised at the earliest opportunity.
- If the parent believes that the injury was caused at pre-school this is still recorded in the Accident Record and an accurate record made of the discussion is made on the child's personal file.

Responding to the signs and symptoms of abuse

- Concerns about the welfare of a child are discussed with the designated safeguarding lead without delay.
- A written record is made of the concern on a Safeguarding incident reporting form as soon as possible.
- Concerns that a child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm are responded to immediately and if a referral is necessary this is made on the same working day.

Responding to a disclosure by a child

- When responding to a disclosure from a child, the aim is to get just enough information to take appropriate action.
- The member of staff at Ducklings pre-school listens carefully and calmly, allowing the child time to express what they want to say.
- Staff do not attempt to question the child but if they are not sure what the child said, or what they meant, they may prompt the child further by saying *'tell me more about that'* or *'show me again'*.
- After the initial disclosure, staff speak immediately to the designated safeguarding lead. They do not further question or attempt to interview a child.
- If a child shows visible signs of abuse such as bruising or injury to any part of the body and it is age appropriate to do so, the key person will ask the child how it happened.
- When recording a child's disclosure on a Safeguarding incident reporting form, their exact words are used as well as the exact words with which the member of staff responded.
- If marks or injuries are observed, these are recorded on a body diagram.

Decision making (all categories of abuse)

The designated safeguarding lead makes a professional judgement about referring to other agencies, including Social Care using the Essex windscreen of need and levels of intervention (Appendix B in our 3. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy)

- Level 1: Child's needs are being met. Universal support.
 - Level 2: Universal Plus. Additional professional support is needed to meet child's needs.
 - Level 3: Universal Partnership Plus. Targeted Early Help. Coordinated response needed to address multiple or complex problems.
 - Level 4: Specialist/Statutory intervention required. Children in acute need, likely to be experiencing, or at risk of experiencing significant harm.
- Staff at Ducklings pre-school are alert to indicators that a family may benefit from early help services and should discuss this with the designated safeguarding lead, and complete a Safeguarding incident reporting form if they have not already done so.

Seeking consent from parents/carers to share information before making a referral for early help (Level 2/3)

Parents are made aware of Ducklings pre-school's Privacy Notice which explains the circumstances under which information about their child will be shared with other agencies. When a referral for early help is necessary, the designated safeguarding lead must always seek consent from the child's parents/carers to share information with the relevant agency.

- If consent is sought and withheld and there are concerns that a child may become at risk of significant harm without early intervention, there may be sufficient grounds to over-ride a parental decision to withhold consent.
- If a parent withholds consent, this information is included on any referral that is made to the local authority. In these circumstances a parent should still be told that the referral is being made beforehand (unless to do so may place a child at risk of harm).

Informing parents when making a child protection referral

In most circumstances consent will not be required to make a child protection referral, because even if consent is refused, there is still a professional duty to act upon concerns and make a referral. When a child protection referral has been made, the designated safeguarding lead contacts the parents (only if agreed with social care) to inform them that a referral has been made, indicating the concerns that have been raised, unless social care advises that the parent should not be contacted until such time as their investigation, or the police investigation, is concluded. Parents are not informed prior to making a referral if:

- there is a possibility that a child may be put at risk of harm by discussion with a parent/carer, or if a serious offence may have been committed, as it is important that any potential police investigation is not jeopardised
- there are potential concerns about sexual abuse, fabricated illness, FGM or forced marriage
- contacting the parent puts another person at risk; situations where one parent may be at risk of harm, e.g. abuse; situations where it has not been possible to contact parents to seek their consent may cause delay to the referral being made

The designated safeguarding lead makes a professional judgment regarding whether consent (from a parent) should be sought before making a child protection referral as described above. They record their decision about informing or not informing parents along with an explanation for this decision. Advice will be sought from the appropriate children's social work team if there is any doubt. Advice can also be sought from the designated officer.

Referring

- The designated safeguarding lead or deputy designated safeguarding lead at Ducklings pre-school follow the Children and Families Service Map and Key Contacts poster (Appendix A in our 3. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy) for making a referral.
- If the designated safeguarding lead or the deputy is not on site, the most senior member of staff present takes responsibility for making the referral to social care.
- If a child is believed to be in immediate danger, or an incident occurs at the end of the session and staff are concerned about the child going home that day, then the Police and/or social care are contacted immediately.

- If the child is 'safe' because they are still in the setting, and there is time to do so, the senior member of staff contacts the pre-school's designated officer for support.
- Arrangements for cover (as above) when the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead are not on-site are agreed in advance by the pre-school supervisor and clearly communicated to all staff.

Further recording

- Information is recorded using a Safeguarding incident reporting form, and a short summary entered on a Child welfare and protection summary. Discussion with parents and any further discussion with social care is recorded. If recording a conversation with parents/carers that is significant, regarding the incident or a related issue, parents are asked to sign and date a record of the conversation. It should be clearly recorded what action was taken, what the outcome was and any follow-up.
- If a referral was made, copies of all documents are kept and stored securely and confidentially (including copies in the child's safeguarding file).
- Each member of staff/volunteer who has witnessed an incident or disclosure should also make a written statement on a Safeguarding incident reporting form, as above.
- The referral is recorded on a Child welfare and protection summary.
- Follow up phone calls to or from social care are recorded in the child's file; with date, time, the name of the social care worker and what was said.
- Safeguarding records are kept up to date and made available for confidential access by the designated officer to allow continuity of support during closures or holiday periods.

Reporting a serious child protection incident using a Confidential safeguarding incident report form

- The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for reporting to the designated officer and seeking advice if required prior to making a referral as described above.
- For child protection concerns at level 3 and 4 it will be necessary for the designated safeguarding lead to complete a Confidential safeguarding incident report form and send it to the designated officer.
- Further briefings are sent to the designated officer when updates are received until the issue is concluded.

Professional disagreement/escalation process

- If a member of staff at Ducklings pre-school disagrees with a decision made by the designated safeguarding lead not to make a referral to social care they must initially discuss and try to resolve it with them.
- If the disagreement cannot be resolved with the designated safeguarding lead and the member of staff continues to feel a safeguarding referral is required, then they discuss this with the designated officer.
- If issues cannot be resolved the whistle-blowing procedures should be followed, as set out below.

- Supervision meetings are also used to discuss concerns, but this must not delay making safeguarding referrals.

Whistleblowing

Ducklings pre-school will ensure that all staff are familiar with the whistleblowing procedure.

The whistle blowing procedure must be followed in the first instance if:

- a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed;
- a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject. This includes non-compliance with policies and procedures, breaches of EYFS and/or registration requirements;
- a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur;
- the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered;
- the working environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged;
- that information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding clauses has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

There are 3 stages to raising concerns as follows:

1. If staff wish to raise or discuss any issues which might fall into the above categories, they should normally raise this issue with their supervisor/designated safeguarding lead.
2. Staff who are unable to raise the issue with their supervisor/designated safeguarding lead should raise the issue with the chairperson/designated officer.
3. If staff are still concerned after the investigation, or the matter is so serious that they cannot discuss it with the chairperson they should raise the matter with Jo Barclay Head of Education, Safeguarding and Wellbeing at Essex County Council, telephone 03330131078, mobile number 07775030021 or email educationsafeguarding@essex.gov.uk.

After a concern has been raised, the supervisor will decide how to respond in a reasonable and appropriate manner. Normally this will involve making internal enquires first, but it may be necessary to carry out an investigation.

Whilst it is hoped that such disclosures will never be necessary, the supervisor recognises that it may find itself in circumstances which are new to it. Each case will be treated on its own merits.

Supervisors' responsibilities

Supervisor/chairperson of the parents committee notified of concerns under this policy are expected to:

- ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with the policy
- ensure that concerns raised are taken seriously;
- treat the matter in confidence, within the parameters of the case;

- where appropriate, investigate properly and make an objective assessment of the concern;
- keep the person raising the concern updated with progress, without breaching confidentiality;
- ensure that the action necessary to resolve a concern is taken;
- take appropriate steps to ensure that the employee's working environment and/or working relationship is/are not prejudiced by the fact of disclosure.

Ultimately, if an issue cannot be resolved and the member of staff believes a child remains at risk because the pre-school or the local authority have not responded appropriately, the NSPCC have introduced a whistleblowing helpline 0800 028 0285 for professionals who believe that:

- their own or another employer will cover up the concern
- they will be treated unfairly by their own employer for complaining
- if they have already told their own employer and they have not responded

Ducklings pre-school will ensure that all staff are aware of the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Staff should be alert to symptoms that would indicate that FGM has occurred, or may be about to occur, and will take appropriate safeguarding action. Designated safeguarding leads should contact the police immediately as well as refer to local authority children's services if we believe that FGM may be about to occur.

It is illegal to undertake FGM or to assist anyone to enable them to practice FGM under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, it is an offence for a UK national or permanent UK resident to perform FGM in the UK or overseas. The practice is medically unnecessary and poses serious health risks to girls. FGM is mostly carried out on girls between the ages of 0-15, statistics indicate that in half of countries who practise FGM girls were cut before the age of 5. Local authority guidance will be followed in relation to FGM, and the designated person is informed regarding specific risks relating to the culture and ethnicity of children who may be attending their pre-school and shares this knowledge with staff.

Symptoms of FGM in very young girls may include difficulty walking, sitting or standing; painful urination and/or urinary tract infection; urinary retention; evidence of surgery; changes to nappy changing or toileting routines; injury to adjacent tissues; spends longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet; unusual and /or changed behaviour after an absence from the pre-school (including increased anxiety around adults or unwillingness to talk about home experiences or family holidays); parents are reluctant to allow the child to undergo normal medical examinations; if an older sibling has undergone the procedure a younger sibling may be at risk; discussion about plans for an extended family holiday

Further guidance

NSPCC 24-hour FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550 or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Government help and advice: www.gov.uk/female-genital-mutilation

Children and young people vulnerable to extremism or radicalisation

Ducklings pre-school has a duty to identify and respond appropriately to concerns of any child or adult at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Local authority have procedures which cover how professionals should respond to concerns that children or young people may be at risk of being influenced by or being made vulnerable by the risks of extremism.

There are potential safeguarding implications for children and young people who have close or extended family or friendship networks linked to involvement in extremism or terrorism.

- The designated safeguarding lead at Ducklings pre-school is required to familiarised themselves with the local authority procedures, as well as online guidance including:
 - Channel Duty guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism - www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-and-prevent-multi-agency-panel-pmap-guidance
 - Prevent Strategy (HMG 2011) - www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011
 - The prevent duty: for schools and childcare providers - www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty
- The designated safeguarding lead at Ducklings pre-school should follow local authority guidance in relation to how to respond to concerns regarding extremism and ensure that staff know how to identify and raise any concerns in relation to this with them.
- The designated safeguarding lead at Ducklings pre-school knows how to refer concerns about risks of extremism/radicalisation to their local authority safeguarding team or the Channel panel, as appropriate.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that they and all other staff working with children and young people understand how to recognise that someone may be at risk of violent extremism.
- The designated safeguarding lead also ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to equality and inclusion and children's rights. The designated safeguarding lead attends termly Prevent briefings and cascades information to all staff. The termly Prevent briefing covers local arrangements for dealing with concerns that a child may be at risk of extremism and/or radicalisation.
- The designated safeguarding lead understands the perceived terrorism risks in relation to the area that the pre-school is in.

Parental consent for radicalisation referrals

Local authority procedures are followed in relation to whether parental consent is necessary prior to making a referral about a concern that a child or adult may be at risk of being drawn into terrorism. It is good practice to seek the consent of the person, or for very young children, the consent of their parent/carer prior to making a referral, but it is not a requirement to seek consent before referring a concern regarding possible involvement in extremism or terrorism if it may put a child at risk, or if an offence may have been or may be committed.

Advice should be sought from Children and Families Service or the Essex education safeguarding team

responsible for safeguarding, as to whether or not consent should be sought on a case-by-case basis.

Designated safeguarding leads should be mindful that discussion regarding potential referral due to concerns may be upsetting for their family. Initial advice regarding whether an incident meets a threshold for referral can be sought from the relevant local agency without specific details such as names of the family being given in certain circumstances.

Consent is required prior to any individual engaging with a Channel intervention. Consent is usually sought by Channel partners, but local authority procedures should be followed regarding this.

If there is a concern that a person is already involved in terrorist activity this must be reported to the Anti-Terrorist Hot Line 0800 789 321, text or phone 0800 0324 539. Police can be contacted on 101.

Concerns about children affected by gang activity/serious youth violence

Members of staff are aware that children can be put at risk by gang activity, both through participation in and as victims of gang violence. Whilst very young children will be very unlikely to become involved in gang activity they may potentially be put at risk by the involvement of others in their household in gangs, such as an adult, sibling or a parent/carer. Our designated safeguarding lead is familiar with our local authority guidance and procedures in relation to safeguarding children affected by gang activity and ensure this is followed where relevant.

Forced marriage/Honour based violence

Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are forced into it. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. In the cases of some vulnerable adults who lack the capacity to consent coercion is not required for a marriage to be forced. A forced marriage is distinct from an arranged marriage. An arranged marriage may have family involvement in arranging the marriages, but crucially the choice of whether to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses.

Forced marriage became criminalised in 2014. There are also civil powers for example a Forced Marriage Protection Order to protect both children and adults at risk of forced marriage and offers protection for those who have already been forced into marriage.

Risks in relation to forced marriage are high and it is important that all staff ensure that anyone at risk of forced marriage is not put in further danger. If someone is believed to be at risk it is helpful to get as much practical information as possible, bearing in mind the need for absolute discretion, information that can be helpful will include things like, names, addresses, passport numbers, national insurance numbers, details of travel arrangements, dates and location of any proposed wedding, names and dates of birth of prospective spouses, details of where and with whom they may be staying etc. Forced marriage can be linked to honour-based violence, which includes assault, imprisonment and murder. Honour based violence can be used to punish an individual for undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour.

In an emergency police should be contacted on 999.

Forced Marriage Unit can be contacted either by members of staff or by potential victims seeking advice in relation to their concerns. The contact details are below.

- Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151
- Email: fmu@fco.gov.uk
- Email for outreach work: fmuoutreach@fco.gov.uk



7.b. Concerns and allegations of serious harm or abuse against staff or volunteers

Concerns may come from a parent, child, colleague, or the public. Allegations or concerns must be referred to the designated safeguarding lead without delay - even if the person making the allegation later withdraws it.

What is a low-level concern?

The NSPCC defines a low-level concern as *'any concern that an adult has acted in a way that:*

- *is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and*
- *doesn't meet the threshold of harm or is not considered serious enough...to refer to the local authority.*

Low-level concerns are part of a spectrum of behaviour. This includes:

- *inadvertent or thoughtless behaviour;*
- *behaviour that might be considered inappropriate depending on the circumstances and*
- *behaviour which is intended to enable abuse.*

Examples of such behaviour could include:

- *being over friendly with children;*
- *having favourites;*
- *adults taking photographs of children on their mobile phone;*
- *engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door and*
- *using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating or offensive language.*

Responding to low-level concerns

Any concerns about the conduct of staff, students or volunteers must be shared with the designated safeguarding lead and recorded. The designated safeguarding lead should be informed of all concerns, including those that may be considered 'low level' and make the final decision on how to respond. Where appropriate this can be done in consultation with the designated officer.

Reporting concerns about the conduct of a colleague, student or volunteer contributes towards a safeguarding culture of openness and trust. It ensures that adults consistently model the setting's values and helps keep children safe. It protects adults from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

If it is not clear that a concern meets the local authority threshold, the designated safeguarding lead should contact the LADO for clarification.

In most instances, low-level concerns about staff conduct can be addressed through supervision, training, or disciplinary processes where an internal investigation may take place.

Identifying

An allegation against a member of staff, volunteer or agency staff constitutes serious harm or abuse if they:

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

Informing

- All staff report allegations to the designated safeguarding lead.
- The designated safeguarding lead alerts the designated officer for the pre-school. If the designated officer is unavailable the designated person contacts the Ofsted representative - which should be within 3-4 hours of the event. Together they form a view about what immediate actions are taken to ensure the safety of the children and staff in the pre-school, and what is acceptable in terms of fact-finding.
- It is essential that no investigation occurs until and unless the LADO has expressly given consent for this to occur, however, the person responding to the allegation does need to have an understanding of what explicitly is being alleged.
- The designated safeguarding lead must take steps to ensure the immediate safety of children, parents, and staff on that day within the pre-school.
- The LADO is contacted as soon as possible and within one working day. If the LADO is on leave or cannot be contacted the LADO team manager is contacted and/or advice sought from the Essex county council safeguarding team.
- A child protection referral is made if required. The LADO, line managers and local safeguarding children's services can advise on whether a child protection referral is required.
- The designated safeguarding lead asks for clarification from the LADO on the following areas:
 - what actions the designated safeguarding lead must take next and when and how the parents of the child are informed of the allegation;
 - whether or not the LADO thinks a criminal offence may have occurred and whether the police should be informed and if so who will inform them;
 - whether the LADO is happy for the pre-school to pursue an internal investigation without input from the LADO, or how the LADO wants to proceed and

- whether the LADO thinks the person concerned should be suspended, and whether they have any other suggestions about the actions the designated safeguarding lead has taken to ensure the safety of the children and staff attending the pre-school.
- The designated safeguarding lead records details of discussions and liaison with the LADO including dates, type of contact, advice given, actions agreed and updates on the child's case file.
- Parents are not normally informed until discussion with the LADO has taken place, however in some circumstances the designated safeguarding lead may need to advise parents of an incident involving their child straight away, for example if the child has been injured and requires medical treatment.
- Staff do not investigate the matter unless the LADO has specifically advised them to investigate internally. Guidance should also be sought from the LADO regarding whether or not suspension should be considered. The supervisor who is dealing with the allegation must take steps to ensure that the immediate safety of children, parents and staff is assured. It may be that in the short-term measures other than suspension, such as requiring a staff member to be office based for a day, or ensuring they do not work unsupervised, can be employed until contact is made with the LADO and advice given.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures staff fill in a Safeguarding incident reporting form.
- If after discussion with the designated safeguarding lead, the LADO decides that the allegation is not obviously false, and there is cause to suspect that the child/ren is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, then the LADO will normally refer the allegation to children's social care.
- If notification to Ofsted is required the Ofsted representative will inform Ofsted as soon as possible, but no later than 14 days after the event has occurred. The designated safeguarding lead will liaise with the designated officer and Ofsted representative about notifying Ofsted.
- The designated safeguarding lead ensures that the Confidential safeguarding incident report form is completed and sent to the designated officer. If the designated officer is unavailable then the Ofsted representative must be contacted.
- Avenues such as performance management or coaching and supervision of staff will also be used instead of disciplinary procedures where these are appropriate and proportionate. If an allegation is ultimately upheld the LADO may also offer a view about what would be a proportionate response in relation to the accused person.
- The designated safeguarding lead must consider revising or writing a new risk assessment where appropriate, for example if the incident related to an instance where a member of staff has physically intervened to ensure a child's safety, or if an incident relates to a difficulty with the environment such as where parents and staff are coming and going, and doors are left open.
- All allegations are investigated even if the person involved resigns or ceases to be a volunteer.

Allegations against the designated safeguarding lead.

- If a member of staff has concerns that the designated safeguarding lead has behaved in a way that indicates they are not suitable to work with children as listed above, this is reported to the designated officer who will investigate further.
- During the investigation, the designated officer will identify another suitably experienced person to take on the role of designated safeguarding lead.
- If an allegation is made against the designated officer, then the Ofsted representative is informed.

Recording

- A record is made of an allegation/concern, along with supporting information. This is then entered on the file of the child, and a Child welfare and protection summary is completed and placed in the front of the child's file.
- If the allegation refers to more than one child, this is recorded in each child's file
- If relevant, a child protection referral is made, with details held on the child's file.

Disclosure and Barring Service

- If a member of staff is dismissed because of a proven or strong likelihood of child abuse, inappropriate behaviour towards a child, or other behaviour that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children such as drug or alcohol abuse, or other concerns raised during a supervision meeting when the staff suitability checks are done, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service is made.

Escalating concerns

- If a member of staff believes at any time that children may be in danger due to the actions or otherwise of a member of staff or volunteer, they must discuss their concerns immediately with the designated safeguarding lead.
- If after discussions with the designated person, they still believe that appropriate action to protect children has not been taken they must speak to the designated officer.
- If there are still concerns then the whistle blowing procedure must be followed, as set out in Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns.



7.c. Visitor or intruder on the premises

The safety and security of the premises is maintained at all time and staff are vigilant in areas that pose a risk, such as shared premises. Procedures are in place to ensure that unauthorised visitors cannot gain access.

Visitors with legitimate business - generally a visitor will have made a prior appointment

- On arrival, they are asked to verify their identity and confirm who they are visiting.
- Staff will ask them to sign in and explain the procedures for the use of mobile phones and emergency evacuation.
- Visitors (including visiting VIPs) are never left alone with the children at any time.
- Visitors to the pre-school are monitored and asked to leave immediately should their behaviour give cause for concern.

Intruder

An intruder is an individual who has not followed visitor procedures and has no legitimate business to be in the pre-school; he or she may or may not be a hazard to the setting.

- An individual who appears to have no business in the pre-school will be asked for their name and purpose for being there.
- The staff member identifies any risk posed by the intruder.
- The staff member ensures the individual follows the procedure for visitors.
- The supervisor is immediately informed of the incident and takes necessary action to safeguard children.
- If there are concerns for the safety of children, staff evacuate them to a safe place in the building and contact police. In some circumstance this could lead to 'lock-down' of the community centre and will be managed by the responding emergency service (see policy Terrorist threat/attack and lock-down).
- The designated safeguarding lead informs their designated officer of the situation at the first opportunity.
- In the case of a serious breach where there was a perceived or actual threat to the safety of the children, the supervisor/designated safeguarding lead completes a Confidential safeguarding incident report form and copies in the chairperson/designated officer on the day of the incident. The chairperson and Ofsted representative ensure a robust organisational response and ensure that learning is shared.



7.d. Uncollected child

If a child is not collected by closing time, or the end of the session and there has been no contact from the parent, or there are concerns about the child's welfare then this procedure is followed.

- The designated safeguarding lead is informed of the uncollected child as soon as possible and attempts to contact the parents by phone.
- If the parents cannot be contacted, the designated safeguarding lead uses the emergency contacts to inform a known carer of the situation and arrange collection of the child.
- After one hour, the designated safeguarding lead contacts the local social care out-of-hours duty officer if the parents or other known carer cannot be contacted and there are concerns about the child's welfare or the welfare of the parents.
- The designated safeguarding lead should arrange for the collection of the child by social care.
- Where appropriate the designated safeguarding lead should also notify police.

Members of staff do not:

- go off the premises to look for the parents
- leave the premises to take the child home or to a carer
- offer to take the child home with them to care for them in their own home until contact with the parent is made
- Staff make a record of the incident in the child's file using , usually an educator. A record of conversations with parents should be made, with parents being asked to sign and date the recording.
- This is logged on the child's personal file along with the actions taken. A Confidential safeguarding incident report form should also be completed if there are safeguarding and welfare concerns about the child, or if Social Care have been involved due to the late collection.
- If there are recurring incidents of late collection, a meeting is arranged with the parents to agree a plan to improve time-keeping and identify any further support that may be required.



7.e. Missing child

In the building

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff informs the designated safeguarding lead who initiates a search within the pre-school room and garden.
- If the child is found within the pre-school, the designated safeguarding lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found in the pre-school or garden, one member of staff searches the community centre and immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately. The parents are then called and informed.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts their designated officer, to inform them of the situation.

Off-site (outing or walk)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the supervisor or deputy supervisor carries out a headcount.
- One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity.
- If the child is not found, the supervisor or deputy supervisor calls the police and then contacts the designated safeguard lead or deputy safeguard lead.
- The designated safeguarding lead informs the parents.
- Members of staff return the children to the pre-school as soon as possible if it is safe to do so. According to the advice of the police, the supervisor or deputy supervisor should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts the designated officer, who attends the pre-school.

Recording and reporting

- A record is made on a Child welfare and protection summary form and a Safeguarding incident reporting form. The supervisor as designated safeguarding lead completes and circulates a Confidential safeguarding incident report form to the designated officer on the same day that the incident occurred.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
- The designated officer carries out a full investigation.

- The designated safeguarding lead and the designated officer speak with the parents together and explain the process of the investigation.
- Each member of staff present during the incident writes a full report using a Safeguarding incident reporting form, which is filed in the child's file. Staff do not discuss any missing child incident with the press.



7.f. Incapacitated parent/carers

Incapacitated refers to a condition which renders a parent/carers unable to take responsibility for their child; this could be at the time of collecting their child from the pre-school or on arrival. Concerns may include:

- appearing drunk
- appearing under the influence of drugs
- demonstrating angry and threatening behaviour to the child, members of staff or others
- appearing erratic or manic

Informing

- If a member of staff is concerned that a parent displays any of the above characteristics, they inform the designated safeguarding lead as soon as possible.
- The designated safeguarding lead assesses the risk and decides if further intervention is required.
- If it is decided that no further action is required, a record of the incident is made on a Safeguarding incident reporting form.
- If intervention is required, the designated safeguarding lead speaks to the parent in an appropriate, confidential manner.
- The designated safeguarding lead will, in agreement with the parent, use emergency contacts listed for the child to ask an alternative adult to collect the child.
- The emergency contact is informed of the situation by the designated safeguarding lead and of the pre-school's requirement to inform social care of their contact details.
- The designated officer is informed of the situation as soon as possible and provides advice and assistance as appropriate.
- If there is no one suitable to collect the child social care are informed.
- If violence is threatened towards anybody, the police are called immediately.
- If the parent takes the child from the pre-school while incapacitated the police are called immediately and a referral is made to social care.

Recording

- The designated safeguarding lead completes a Safeguarding incident reporting form and if social care were contacted a Confidential safeguarding incident report form is completed the designated officer. If police were contacted a Confidential safeguarding incident report form should also be copied to the Ofsted representative.
- Further updates/notes/conversations/ telephone calls are recorded.



7.g. Death of a child on-site

Identifying

- If it is suspected that a child has died in the pre-school, emergency resuscitation will be given to the child by a qualified First Aider until the ambulance arrives.
- Only a medical practitioner can confirm a child has died.

Informing

- The designated safeguarding lead ensures emergency services have been contacted; ambulance and police.
- The parents are contacted and asked to come to the setting immediately, informing them that there has been an incident involving their child and that an ambulance has been called; asking them to come straight to the pre-school or hospital as appropriate.
- The designated safeguarding lead calls the designated officer and informs them of what has happened.
- The Ofsted representative is contacted, and a Confidential safeguarding incident report form prepared by the designated safeguarding lead and designated officer.
- A member of staff is delegated to phone all parents to collect their children. The reason given must be agreed by the designated officer and the information given should be the same to each parent.
- The decision on how long the pre-school will remain closed will be based on police advice.
- Ofsted are informed of the incident by the Ofsted representative and a RIDDOR report is made.
- Staff will not discuss the death of a child with the press.

Responding

- The chairperson and Ofsted representative will decide how the death is investigated within the organisation after taking advice from relevant agencies.
- The chairperson and Ofsted representative will coordinate support for staff and children to ensure their mental health and well-being.



7.h. Looked after children

Identification

A 'Looked after Child' is a child in public care, who is placed with foster carers, in a residential home or with parents or other relatives.

Services provided to Looked After Children

Two-year-olds

- When available places will be offered to two-year-old children who are looked after, where the placement in the pre-school will normally last a minimum of three months.
- Where the child is already in attendance and has a secure attachment with an existing key person a continuation of the existing place will be offered.

Three-and four-year-olds

- When available places will be offered for funded children who are looked after, where the placement in the pre-school will normally last a minimum of six weeks.
- If a child who attends our pre-school is taken into care and is cared for by a local carer the place will continue to be available to the child.

Additional Support

- The designated safeguarding lead and key person liaise with agencies and professionals involved with the child, and his or her family, and ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
- A meeting of professionals involved with the child is convened by the pre-school at the start of a placement. A Personal Education Plan (PEP) for children over 3 years old is put in place within 10 days of the child becoming looked after.
- Following this meeting, a care plan for looked after children form is completed. The care plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks, three months, and thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- Regular contact will be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings, which will include contribution to the PEP which is reviewed annually.



7.i. E-safety (including all electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities)

Online Safety

It is important that children and young people receive consistent messages about the safe use of technology and are able to recognise and manage the risks posed in both the real and the virtual world.

Terms such as 'e-safety', 'online', 'communication technologies' and 'digital technologies' refer to fixed and mobile technologies that adults and children may encounter, now and in the future, which allow them access to content and communications that could raise issues or pose risks.

The issues are:

Content – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material

Contact – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users

Conduct – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm

I.C.T Equipment

- Our I.C.T coordinator ensures that all computers have up-to-date virus protection installed.
- Tablets are only used for the purposes of observation, assessment and planning and to take photographs for the children's learning journeys.
- Tablets remain with the keyperson and are stored securely at all times when not in use.
- Members of staff follow all the guidance provided.

Internet access

- Children never have unsupervised access to the internet.
- The supervisor ensures that risk assessments in relation to e-safety are completed.
- Only reputable sites with a focus on early learning are used (e.g. CBeebies).
- Video sharing sites such as YouTube are not accessed due to the risk of inappropriate content.
- Children are taught the following stay safe principles in an age-appropriate way:
 - only go online with a grown up;
 - be kind online and keep information about me safe;
 - only press buttons on the internet to things I understand and
 - tell a grown up if something makes me unhappy on the internet.
- The staff support children's resilience in relation to issues they may face online, and address issues such as staying safe, appropriate friendships, asking for help if unsure, not keeping secrets as part of social and emotional development in age-appropriate ways.
- All computers for use by children are sited in an area clearly visible to staff.

- Members of staff report any suspicious or offensive material, including material which may incite racism, bullying or discrimination to the Internet Watch Foundation at www.iwf.org.uk.

The IT coordinator ensures staff have access to age-appropriate resources to enable them to assist children to use the internet safely.

Strategies to minimise risk include:

- Check apps, websites and search results before using them with children.
- Children in Early Years should always be supervised when accessing the internet.
- Ensure safety modes and filters are applied – default settings tend not to ensure a high level of privacy or security. But remember you still need to supervise children closely.
- Role model safe behaviour and privacy awareness. Talk to children about safe use, for example ask permission before taking a child's picture even if parental consent has been given.
- Make use of home visits to inform your understanding of how technology is used with in the home and the context of the child with regards to technology.
- Check privacy settings to make sure personal data is not being shared inadvertently or inappropriately. (source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety>).

Personal mobile phones – staff and visitors (includes internet enabled devices)

- Personal mobile phones and internet enabled devices are not used by staff during working hours. This does not include breaks where personal mobiles may be used off the premises or in the staff room/office. The supervisor completes a risk assessment for where they can be used safely.
- Personal mobile phones are switched off and stored in lockers in the office.
- In an emergency, personal mobile phones may be used in the privacy of the office with permission.
- Staff ensure that contact details of Ducklings Pre-School are known to family and people who may need to contact them in an emergency.
- Staff can take their mobile phones on outings, but they must only be used in an emergency and privately away from the children.
- Members of staff do not use personal equipment to take photographs of children.
- Parents and visitors do not use their mobile phones on the premises. There is an exception if a visitor's company/organisation operates a policy that requires contact with their office periodically throughout the day. Visitors are advised of private spaces where they can use their mobile.

Cameras and videos

- Members of staff do not bring their own cameras or video recorders to the pre-school.
- Photographs/recordings of children are only taken for valid reasons, e.g. to record learning and development, or for displays, and are only taken on equipment belonging to the pre-school. Children are given the opportunity to consent to their photograph being taken, even if parent/carer permissions are in place.

- Camera and video use is monitored by the supervisor and deputy supervisor.
- Parents can photograph or record their own children at special events, general permission is gained from all parents for their children to be included. Parents are reminded at every event that they do not have a right to upload photos of anyone else's children.
- Photographs/recordings of children are only made if relevant permissions are in place.
- If photographs are used for publicity, parental consent is gained and safeguarding risks minimised, e.g. children may be identified if photographed in a sweatshirt with the name of the pre-school on it.

Cyber Bullying

If staff become aware that a child is the victim of cyber-bullying at home or elsewhere, they discuss this with the parents and refer them to help, such as: NSPCC Tel: 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk or ChildLine Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Use of social media

Staff are expected to:

- understand how to manage their security settings to ensure that their information is only available to people they choose to share information with;
- ensure the organisation is not negatively affected by their actions and do not name the pre-school;
- are aware that comments or photographs online may be accessible to anyone and should use their judgement before posting;
- are aware that images, such as those on Snapshot may still be accessed by others and a permanent record of them made, e.g. by taking a screen shot of the image with a mobile phone;
- observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work;
- not share information they would not want children, parents or colleagues to view;
- set privacy settings to personal social networking and restrict those who are able to access;
- not accept service users/children/parents as friends, as it is a breach of professional conduct;
- report any concerns or breaches to the designated safeguarding lead in the pre-school and
- not engage in personal communication, including on social networking sites, with children and parents with whom they act in a professional capacity. There may be occasions when the member of staff and family are friendly prior to the child coming to the pre-school. In this case information is shared with the supervisor and a agreement in relation to boundaries are agreed.

Use/distribution of inappropriate images

- Staff are aware that it is an offence to distribute indecent images and that it is an offence to groom children online. In the event of a concern that a colleague is behaving inappropriately, staff advise the designated safeguarding lead who follows the procedure Allegations against staff or volunteers.



7.j. Key person supervision meetings

Staff taking on the role of key person must have supervision meetings in line with this procedure.

Structure

- Supervision meetings are held once every half term for key persons. For part-time staff this may be less frequent but at least once a term.
- Key persons are supervised by the supervisor or deputy supervisor.
- Supervision meetings are held in a confidential space suitable for the task.
- Key persons should prepare for a supervision meeting by having the relevant information to hand.

Content

The child focused element of supervision meetings must include discussion about:

- the development and well-being of the member of staff's key children and offer staff opportunity to raise concerns in relation to any child attending. *Safeguarding concerns must always reported to the designated safeguarding lead immediately and not delayed until a scheduled supervision meeting.*
- reflection on the journey a child is making and potential well-being or safeguarding concerns for the children they have key responsibility for;
- promoting the interests of children.
- coaching to improve professional effectiveness based on a review of observed activity/teaching;
- reviewing plans and agreements from previous supervision meetings including any identified learning needs for the member of staff
- During the supervision meeting staff can discuss any concerns they have about inappropriate behaviour displayed by colleagues but must never delay until a scheduled supervision meeting to raise concerns.
- Staff are reminded of the need to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children that have occurred during their employment. New information is referred immediately to the designated officer.

Recording

- Key person supervision meeting discussions are recorded and is retained by the supervisor and a copy provided to the key person.

- The key person and supervisor must sign and date the minutes of a supervision meeting within 4 weeks of it happening and disagreements over recorded content must be minuted.
- Each member of staff has a supervision file that is stored securely in their staff files at all times.
- Concerns raised during a supervision meeting about an individual child's welfare may result in safeguarding concerns not previously recognised as such, these are recorded on a Safeguarding incident reporting form and placed on the child's file. The reasons why the concerns have not previously been considered are explored.
- Additional safeguarding or welfare decisions made in relation to a child during a supervision meeting are recorded on the individual case file. The supervisor/designated safeguarding lead should ensure the recording is made.

Checking continuing suitability

- Supervisors check with staff if there is any new information pertaining to their suitability to work with children. This only needs to be recorded on the supervision meeting record.
- Where staff are on zero hours contracts or are employed as and when needed, the supervisor completes the staff suitability self-declaration form every term or at the beginning of every new period of work.
- Regarding the position of students on placement there is an expectation that as part of the agreement with the collage/school they have sought information regarding their student's suitability to work with children.

Exceptional Circumstances

Where exceptional circumstances prevent staff from conducting a supervision meeting as outlined in this procedure, the supervisor is informed in writing, a copy placed on the supervision meetings file and the appropriate actions agreed to ensure that the pre-school meets its obligations within the EYFS.



7.k. Staff code of conduct

Aim

This policy describes the standards of conduct and behaviour expected from our staff, students, volunteers and visitors who undertake work and spend time in Ducklings pre-School.

It is intended to help you by describing the standards expected of all persons caring for educating and safeguarding all children that attend Ducklings pre-school.

Please take your time and read this policy and ensure your conduct meets these requirements. If you are at all uncertain about what is expected, please seek further clarification from your supervisor or the chairperson on the parents committee so that you do not unwittingly contravene this code or otherwise act against Ducklings pre-school's policies. Contravening or failing to act within the spirit of the code or behaving in a manner which could bring the good name of Ducklings pre-school into disrepute, whether or not within the workplace or working time, might be seen as a breach of discipline and could lead to action being taken against you under the appropriate procedure.

While workers who are not employees of the pre-school are expected to comply with the spirit of the code, any action that may be taken in response to a breach will depend on the precise nature of their working relationship with the provision.

This code relates to all staff, employees, committee members and volunteers working for or at Ducklings pre-school and therefore must be aware of and adhere to this policy.

Objectives

- As a pre-school employee, you should put the well-being, development and progress of children first. You should recognise that you are in a position to influence children through your slightest actions, comments or behaviour. As a pre-school employee, you are a person of trust and have a duty of care, feelings, nurture, support, education and safeguarding of every child within the setting.
- To the public you are a representative of the pre-school. You are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional competence, knowledge, integrity, confidentiality, financial propriety and personal conduct. Contact with all members of the pre-school, the committee, including parents and outside visitors, should be courteous, professional, confidential, polite, efficient and impartial to all groups and individuals. You must also familiarise yourself with and adhere to any rules or code of contact or policies relating to the pre-school and role and you should comply with all reasonable requirements or instructions from the supervisor and/or the chairperson. Early years specific requirements are detailed below in the policy.

- It is not appropriate for you when working within your role as an employee to oppose the stated aims, objectives and policies of Ducklings pre-school or to undermine the performance of their duties and responsibilities. It is important for all employees to present a unified image to the public.
- You should ensure that your relationships with your fellow employees and children are always conducted in a professional and courteous manner; you should not censure other colleagues or criticise their work within the hearing of other colleagues or parents. It is not acceptable to use sarcasm or make jokes at the expense of staff and children or embarrass or humiliate others or discriminate against or favour children.

As an early years practitioner working with children, we would expect calm voices, eye level communications, children's level of engagement and a friendly and welcoming manner, leading children with care, demonstrating good role modelling of how we treat each other.

We would also expect effective and consistent strategies for children's expectations, boundaries and attention rather than adults raising unacceptable levels of tones and words.

- It is not acceptable for you to publicly criticise or blame Ducklings pre-school, colleagues or the committee through any medium including internet 'blogs', websites or social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter or Tik Tok and you must be aware that the laws governing defamation, breach of copyright, etc. apply equally to on-line as to other forms of communications. Offensive, defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and may constitute a disciplinary and/or criminal offence, as could the disclosure/publication of any confidential information about the pre-school, its staff, the children or other members of the pre-school community.
- It is incumbent on you to ensure that you are aware of and comply with any relevant rules and instructions which pertain to your particular job, including the *Early years foundation stage statutory framework (2024)*, *Keeping children safe in education (2024)*, *Working together to Safeguard Children (2023)*, *Promoting positive behaviour, Confidentiality, recording and sharing information, Whistleblowing, Inclusion, etc.* The code cannot cover every situation but will be subject to reasonable interpretation. Any disagreement involving the interpretation or application of the code as it applies to you should be discussed with your supervisor in the first instance. However, if you feel the code is being applied unreasonably you may be able to seek redress through the pre-school's grievance procedure.

Staff and family relationships

- You are expected to treat all children and families with dignity and fairness, building relationships rooted in mutual respect and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a person in a position of trust. You should comply with safe working practices of the pre-school.
- You must communicate personally with families via email, mobile phone or internet other than on pre-school related matters, using the pre-schools communication platforms.
- You must not discuss any pre-school matters outside of our set communications with families; this may result in breach of confidentiality and safeguarding procedures.

Personal interests

- The interests of Ducklings pre-school or the way you do your job must not be influenced by personal interests or those of relatives, friends or membership of external organisations or societies. There should be no grounds for suspicion that you are using your position with or knowledge of Ducklings pre-school for personal gain or that you could be influenced by improper motives. If you belong to outside organisations, including voluntary organisations, there must be no conflict with your job or Ducklings pre-school interests. You should advise your supervisor in writing about anything which could give this impression.

Private work

- Ducklings pre-school equipment, working time or other resources must not be used to undertake private work.
- Ducklings pre-school needs to be aware if its employees undertake private work or voluntary activities in their own time to ensure that there is no conflict of interests with the pre-school and to meet its obligations under Health and Safety legislation. Therefore, to protect yourself and Ducklings pre-school from potential criticism you should not put yourself in a position where there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest. You should be aware that outside work or activity, whether or not you receive payment, could reduce your ability to safely and effectively carry out your employment with Ducklings pre-school e.g. through tiredness, and that would be considered unacceptable.
- You must advise the chairperson of the parents committee before engaging in any other work especially if it could reasonably be seen to conflict with your employment with the pre-school or lead to misunderstanding or criticism. We ask our staff to be open and honest so we can support and protect both parties from any concerns that may affect your suitability to work.
- You must not undertake private work when on sick leave without the express knowledge and prior written approval of the chairperson of the parents committee and subject to appropriate medical advice.

Expressing concern about irregularities and tackling malpractice

- If you feel there is something seriously wrong at work, please tell the appropriate person as a 'voice of concern'. It might be, for example, the conduct of another employee, the way a contractor is behaving, a work practice, something that is endangering the safety of children or staff. You might be the first to notice it and your intervention could stop things getting worse. The staff are expected to adhere to the Whistleblowing procedures in any situation of concern.
- No matter how reticent you may feel, you should raise any serious concern, e.g. a suspicion of fraud or corruption or reasonable belief that a child or adult's health, safety or well-being are in danger with the supervisor so that potentially serious problems or malpractice can be addressed without undue delay. If this is not appropriate, then you should contact either the chairperson of the parents committee, If you do raise a genuine concern in good faith all reasonable steps will be taken to respect your confidence and protect you from possible reprisals.

- Ducklings pre-school take these issues very seriously and will investigate and address any problems genuinely raised. However, any frivolous, malicious or mischievous use of the Whistleblowing procedures will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Copyright

- You should be aware that 'intellectual property' such as software, ideas, documents, etc. created during your employment belong to Ducklings pre-school. All files, materials, the media upon which they are located and all software programmes or packages which are utilised or developed solely for or in connection with your job remains the property of the school.

Confidentiality

- Ducklings pre-school is committed to open government, and, in law, certain information must be made available to the staff, committee, service users and the public. However, you must make sure you know whether information is 'public' or confidential and treated it accordingly.
- You may sometimes acquire information at work which has not been made public or is confidential. Examples include information about a child or family, a colleague, information on tenders or costs, the proceedings of confidential meetings.
- You must ensure that sensitive and/or confidential information is properly secured and safeguarded at all times especially if being transported in paper or electronic formats. Particular care must be taken with information stored on portable electronic media such as laptops and memory devices, which are often targeted for theft due to their high intrinsic value.
- Confidential information which comes into your possession must not be used for personal benefit or divulged to other parties except in the proper course of duty, for example to other professionals working with the child. If you have any doubt whether or not disclosure is appropriate, you must check with the supervisor, designated safeguarding lead or chairperson of the parents committee before releasing confidential information.
- Some information can be extremely valuable in business and commerce and its publication loss or misuse could seriously disadvantage Ducklings pre-school and its employees. Therefore, it is important that you do not, deliberately or inadvertently, pass on information, including software, during or after your employment with the pre-school, to anyone who has no right to receive it. You must not discuss, disclose, publicise or use such information for your own or anyone else's personal interest or advantage.
- You must not criticise Ducklings pre-school, its policies or staff in open media such as internet @blogs', websites, social networking sites, etc. where it may be seen by parents, children, committee members or others in the community.

Contact with the media

- Unless you are properly authorised to speak with, write or give interviews to the media you should refer any enquires from the media on work related matters to the chairperson of the parents committee.

Information technology, social media and data protection

- Everyone using computing equipment has a duty of care to use it according to prescribed arrangements, e.g. to avoid introducing computer viruses, to comply with the Data Protection Act, General Data Protection Regulations and to safeguard and ensure the security of information.
- You must familiarise yourself with Ducklings pre-school's E-safety (including all electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities) policy, including use of the internet. In particular, all use of the internet and email facilities must be authorised, legal. Appropriate and in accordance with the provisions of our policies. Personal use of any devices such as mobile phones, laptops or iPads is prohibited within working hours. The staff all have use or access to a pre-school laptop for business use.

Mobile devices must be kept locked, in your bags, in a locker. The staff can use them during their allocated breaks, away from the children.

Please refer to the Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults policy and E-safety (including all electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities) policy.

Ducklings pre-school has two work mobiles, one is used by the administrator and the second one is kept in the fire box, which is used for parent communications and external calls in an emergency. Ducklings also has six iPads for Tapestry use.

Failure to comply with the policies in force or any unauthorised use of such facilities will be dealt with in accordance with relevant disciplinary procedure.

- We discourage social media friendships with families still attending Ducklings pre-school. If you are a 'friend' of a parent of a child, you should be particularly careful not to share information about children, staff or working practices. You should ensure that full privacy settings are applied to your social media accounts. You must remain professional at all times and also ensure your activities/posts do not conflict the interest and trust of your position as a person of trust.

Use of pre-school resources and equipment

- Facilities, equipment, vehicles, materials and other resources provided by Ducklings pre-school for use in your work must not be used for any other purpose without permission, e.g. photocopying, private telephone calls. Mobile phones are provided exclusively for business use and must not be used to make private calls. In this context a call 'home' to advise that you have been unavoidably delayed because of work would not be considered a private call.

Equality

- All members of the community, including pupils, families and other staff have a right to be treated fairly and with dignity. You must make yourself aware of and comply with the pre-school's Promoting inclusion, equality and valuing diversity policy and procedures.

Political neutrality/extremism

- All staff have a responsibility to ensure that they act appropriately in terms of their behaviour, the views they express (in particular political views) and the use of pre-school resources at all times.
- You must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory Framework and must not allow your own personal/political opinions to influence your work. In particular, you must not behave or act in any way that undermines fundamental British Values as defined within the Counter-Terrorism and Security act 2015 as democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect; tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.
- You must not express radical or extremist views; promote or permit the voicing of views or incitement of any action in support of extremism, terrorism, radicalisation or any prohibited organisations.

Standard of appearance

- Staff are expected to present a reasonable and professional appearance and to dress appropriately to the circumstances within the working environment, remembering that you are working with children. Logo polo tops, and hoodies will be allocated. We ask that staff wear comfortable trousers/leggings and comfortable safe shoes/trainers – no open toe sandals or flip flops.
Clothing should not be offensive, revealing or sexually provocative and should not display political or other any other slogans.
- Where uniform or protective clothing is issued it must be worn as required when at work or representing the pre-school, PPE should be worn when carrying out nappy changes, body fluid clean ups.
Handling of foods require effective hand washing procedures and the appropriate protection and equipment. You must maintain appropriate standards of conduct whether or not on duty, e.g. when travelling to and from work.

Relatives and close personal relationships in the pre-school

- In order to avoid any possible accusation of bias you should endeavour to not be directly involved in the appointment, promotion, discipline or other employment decision relating to another employee to whom you are related or with whom you have a close personal relationship.
These decisions will be handed to the chairperson of the parents committee. Ducklings pre-school fully expect that standards delivered by all staff to a high level and managed accordingly whether colleagues have a close relationship/or relative.

- If you work in close proximity with other employees or children to whom you are related or have a close personal connection, you must maintain a strictly professional relationship at work. You should also be aware that if any relationship leads to disruption in the workplace, unacceptable conduct or performance or situations involving undue favouritism or detriment, action will be taken under the appropriate procedure which could lead to your contract being terminated.

Smoke free environment

- Ducklings pre-school and the Great Notley Community Centre are smoke free areas. Since July 2007, it has been against the law to smoke in workplaces; failure to comply is a criminal offence.

Drugs and alcohol

- Pre-school staff must not take drugs, alcohol or any other substance before work, during a break or at lunchtime that is capable of causing their behaviour, judgement or performance at work to be affected. This is particularly important for employees who have responsibility for children, and who come into contact with members of the public and/or visitors. Please note that it is equally inappropriate for those working in close proximity to children to have alcohol on their breath even though this may not amount to drunkenness.

Health and safety

- Unsafe working can endanger you, your colleagues, pupils and members of the public. You must familiarise yourself with the Health and Safety policy and procedures. Please speak to your supervisor for further information. You must follow the rules, codes and the safe practices they describe, including reporting any accidents, incidents or near misses you have at work.

Essential training

- Pre-school staff are expected to make every effort to comply with reasonable requests to attend training which is a statutory requirement or essential for your job role, as well as attending staff meetings. Employees will be required to undertake mandatory training as requested to be able to safely work in ratio; safeguarding, prevent, first aid and allergy awareness training. You will be required to take additional training to continue your professional development. Staff members are also responsible to ensure they upskill themselves and request help and support as and when they need it.

Criminal charges, cautions and convictions

- You must advise your manager immediately if you are charged with or cautioned or convicted of any criminal offence whilst you are an employee of Ducklings pre-school. While such proceedings will not necessarily affect your employment, the pre-school needs to be sure there are no implications for the provision, its reputation, the safety of children or in relation to the role you undertake.