

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) arrangements for Ladybirds Playgroup

June 2020

Introduction

This revised addendum of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy contains details of our changed safeguarding arrangements during the current pandemic in order to protect all children, whether attending the setting or remaining at home, from harm and abuse.

The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage 2017 (Section 3 Safeguarding and Welfare requirements) and Working Together 2018 apply with regard to keeping children safe. Despite the changes, the setting's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: **children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the Designated Person/s for Child Protection (DP) in line with our established safeguarding procedure.**

From March 2020 parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible and where it was safer to do so to slow the spread of Covid-19. Many children will continue to remain at home during the initial stages of the phased return. However, from the end of June, we will be welcoming some of the children back.

Priority will continue to be given to providing places for 'key worker' children (those children of workers critical to the Covid-19 response) and those classed as having vulnerabilities, with an EHCP or have an allocated social worker.

The phased return has been carefully planned with reference to Department for Education guidance:

- Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1st June 2020
- Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare Settings
- Covid-19 Safeguarding in Schools, Colleges and Other Providers
- Our setting Covid-19 Risk Assessment

This guidance supports the Management Team and DPs in settings;

- With regard to safeguarding, the best interests of the child must always continue to be a priority
- A DP should always be available on site while the setting is open. In the unusual circumstance this is not possible a DP will be contactable by phone or email and all staff should have these contact details.
- If staff have a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to follow the setting's usual safeguarding procedures. This includes the Child Protection procedure which requires staff to advise a DP immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in setting or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.
- It is essential that unsuitable people are not able to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children.
- Children should continue to be protected when they are on line.

Our Designated Person for Child Protection are:

Name: Claire Butcher, Joint Playgroup Leader

Telephone: 07786752949

Email: Claire.butcher@ladybirdplaygroup.org

Our Setting will;

- Aim to have a DP on site when the setting is open (to be able to access relevant records and take the necessary action)
- Ensure there are contingency arrangements should the DP not be available (a DP is available by 'phone)
- Ensure all staff know who the DP is on a daily basis
- Ensure that the DP knows how to contact Children's Social Care and the Early Help Hub.

DP training is unlikely to take place during the period COVID-19 measures are in place, therefore a DP who has been trained will continue to be classed as trained even if they miss their refresher training. DPs will continue to read and implement, as relevant, updates added to the Cambridgeshire Early Years and Childcare: Designated Person for Child Protection (PVI) Knowledge Hub and the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board communications and website.

Identifying Vulnerability

We have put in place specific safeguarding arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Children in Care
- Previous Children in Care
- Children subject to a child protection plan
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker. There is an expectation that children with a social worker **must** attend the setting (or another setting by arrangement), unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.
- Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Children on the edge of Social Care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker. Where required these children will be offered a place at setting (or another setting by arrangement).
- Other children the setting considers vulnerable. More children may be added to this group in response to concerns raised with the DP. These children can be offered care at the setting if required.

All vulnerable children continue to be eligible to attend the setting during the period of phased return. Each of the above children has an individual support plan which has been shared with other agencies involved in their care.

Attendance

The setting is following the attendance guidance issued by government. Where a child is expected and does not arrive, the setting will follow their attendance procedure and make contact with the family. If contact is not possible by 9:30am the DP must be informed. The DP will attempt a range of methods to contact the parent (Skype, FaceTime, through a relative etc.). If we are unable to make contact with a family about a child about whom we have concerns after a reasonable number of attempts, we may need to seek further advice about safe and well checks. A risk assessment will be undertaken to consider how to manage the implications of COVID-19 alongside other risks perceived to the child. The risk of COVID-19 **does not override** the duty on the setting to ensure children are safe.

Supporting Children in the Setting

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There may be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty and financial or health anxiety. Supporting children's wellbeing will be at the forefront of our approach and staff will seek to provide reassurance as we manage the transition period. Staff will talk to children about the changes to their day in an age appropriate manner, acknowledge and listen to their anxieties and support them to understand the altered routines. Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DP about any concerns.

We recognise that for some children, home may not be a safe space, and there may be children who are relieved to return to the setting. Staff have been reminded of the need to respond sensitively to children's differing experiences during the period of closure. Staff have been asked to be particularly vigilant, as more children return to the setting, for

signs and indicators that suggest a child may have experienced abuse or neglect. Staff have been trained about how to manage a disclosure from a child, and understand that any safeguarding concerns, including those that relate to the period of setting closure, must be referred immediately to a setting DP in the usual way.

Prior to children returning to the setting, parents and carers will be asked to ensure that all personal details held, such as emergency contact numbers are correct and ask for any additional emergency contact numbers where they are available. At this time, parents and carers will also be asked to advise the setting if there are any changes regarding the child's welfare, health and wellbeing that it would help the setting to be made aware of. Where the setting is aware of particular circumstances affecting a child or family, such as bereavement, a relationship breakdown or an incident of domestic violence this will be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis so that children can be best supported.

Supporting Children Not in the Setting

We recognise that some children will not be eligible to return to the setting immediately due to the phased nature of re-opening, and that some parents/carers of children eligible to attend may choose not to send them to the setting at this time. We recognise that the setting may be a protective factor for children and that the current circumstances can affect the mental health and emotional well-being of children and their parents/carers. There is a robust communication plan in place for these children and a record will be kept of all contact made with the child and family.

Peer on Peer abuse

We recognise the potential for abuse to occur between children, especially in the context of a setting closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between children who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other settings or schools as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between children.

On-line Risks

Children may be using the internet more during this period. Staff will be aware of the signs and indicators of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the setting.

- The setting continues to ensure appropriate filters and monitors are in place
- Staff have discussed the risk that professional boundaries could slip during this exceptional period and been reminded of the setting's staff code of conduct and importance of using setting systems to communicate with children and their families.

Parents and carers have received information about keeping children safe online with peers, the setting and the wider internet community. Parents have been offered the following links:

- [Internet matters](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online

- [London Grid for Learning](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Net-aware](#) - for support for parents and carers from the NSPCC
- [Parent info](#) - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
- [Thinkuknow](#) - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) - advice for parents and carers

Free additional support for staff in responding to online safety issues can be accessed from the Professionals Online Safety Helpline at the UK Safer Internet Centre

Allegations or concerns about staff

With such different arrangements children could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. We remind all staff to maintain the view that ‘it could happen here’ and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the safeguarding team.

Any staff or volunteers from outside our setting will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of the risks and know how to take action, using the setting procedures, if they are concerned. We have confirmed the arrangements to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at the local authority remain unchanged. If necessary, the setting will continue to follow the duty to refer to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

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

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

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

The setting will ensure the immediate safety of the children.

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

New staff or volunteers

New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning with the DP. They will be asked to read the setting Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and Addendum, the Behaviour Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct. The DP will ensure new staff know who to contact if worried about a child and ensure the new starters are familiar with the child protection procedure.

If staff or volunteers are transferring in from other childcare settings for a temporary period to support the care of children, we will seek evidence from their setting that:

- the member of staff has completed relevant safeguarding training in line with other similar staff or volunteers, and
- where the role involves regulated activity and the appropriate DBS check has been undertaken by that setting we will undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether a new DBS would need to be undertaken. It may be in these exceptional times we can rely on the DBS undertaken by their setting.

Our child protection procedures hold strong:

- Volunteers may not be left unsupervised with children until suitable checks have been undertaken. People supervising volunteers must be themselves in regulated activity, able to provide regular, day to day supervision and reasonable in all circumstances to protect the children.
- The setting will undertake a written risk assessment on the specific role of each volunteer to decide whether to obtain an enhanced DBS check (with barred list information) for all staff and volunteers new to working in regulated activity in line with DBS guidance.
- When undertaking ID checks on documents for the DBS it is reasonable to initially check these documents online through a live video link and to accept scanned images of documents for the purpose of applying for the check. The actual documents will then be checked against the scanned images when the employee or volunteer arrives for their first day.

New children at the setting

- Where children join our setting from other settings we will require confirmation from the DP whether they have a Child Welfare File or SEN statement/EHCP. This file must be provided securely **before** the child begins at our setting and a call made from our DP to the placing school/setting's DP to discuss how best to keep the child safe. In some unusual circumstance this may not be possible. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker. Safeguarding information about children placed in our setting will be recorded using our safeguarding system. Information will be securely copied to the placing setting/school DP and will be securely returned to the placing setting on completion of the child's placement with us so there is a continuous safeguarding record for the child.
- The DP will undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information. This will be recorded on our safeguarding recording system.

Adoption of the policy addendum

This policy appendix was adopted for

Ladybirds Play and Toddler Group

Date and Sign

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June 2020