1.2 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection

(including managing allegations of abuse against a member of staff)

**Policy statement:**

Our setting will work with children, parents, and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Our safeguarding policy is based on the three key commitments of the Preschool Learning Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, the Prevent Duty Guidance 2015 and the Revised Early Years Foundation Stage 2017 and the EYFS Reforms 2021.

**Procedures:**

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

Key Commitment 1. The Alliance is committed to building a ‘culture of safety’ in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of its service delivery.

**Staff and volunteers:**

Our designated person who coordinates child protection issues is:

* Donna Spiers, Attimore Barn Pre-School
* Karina Saunders, The Commons Pre-School / Donna Wilsmore The Commons BC / Karina Saunders, Kayley Harris and Donna Wilsmore, The Commons ASC
* Michelle Levy, Knightsfield Pre-Schoolers
* Jane McCullagh, Hardings Pre-School

Our designated deputy who coordinates child protection issues is:

* Lucy Kirwan, , Attimore Barn Pre-School
* Donna Wilsmore, The Commons Pre-School
* Kayley Harris, The Commons BC
* Karina Saunders, Kayley Harris and Donna Wilsmore, The Commons ASC
* Hewi Davies, Knightsfield Pre-Schoolers
* Delia Jones, Hardings Pre-School

Our designated officer who oversees this work is:

* Claire Mason, Co-Owner
* We ensure all our staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and parents are made aware of them to.
* All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues.
* All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and the circumstances under which they may share information about you and your child with other agencies.
* We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
* Applicants of posts within the provision are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
* Candidates are informed of the need to carry out enhanced disclosure checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) before posts can be confirmed.
* Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
* We abide by OFSTED requirements in respect of references and DBS checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the provision or has access to the children. All employees sign an employee declaration form as part of their Induction.
* We record information about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including: the DBS reference number, the date the disclosure was obtained and the details of who obtained it.
* All new staff are moved on to the live DBS Update Service as part of our robust recruitment process. We are phasing in the live DBS update service for all existing staff.
* We inform all staff that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders or reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment with us).
* Volunteers do not work unsupervised.
* We abide by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from employment or resign in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
* We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
* We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the provision so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
* We take steps to ensure children are not photographed or filmed-on video for any purpose than to record their development all their participation in events organised by us. Parents take a permission box on their parent contract on enrolment and have access to records holding visual images of their children.
* We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual as well as neglect.
* When children are suffering from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or maybe experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through:
	+ Significant changes in their behaviour
	+ Deterioration of their general well-being
	+ Their comments which may give cause for concern, all the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure)
	+ Changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play
	+ Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect
	+ Any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting
* We consider factors affecting parental capacity, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parents’ drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parents learning disability
* *We are aware of other factors that affect children’s vulnerability such as abuse of disabled children, fabricated or induced illness, child abuse link to beliefs in spirit possession, sexual exploitation of children such as through Internet abuse and Female Genital Mutilation may affect or may have affected children and young people using our provision.* Online FGM training is available to all staff.
* We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour-based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. County lines drug trafficking is the practice of trafficking/buying drugs in rural areas and smaller towns away from major cities.
* Witchcraft is a belief in witchcraft, spirit possession and other forms of the supernatural and can lead to children being blamed for bad luck, and subsequently abused. Fear of the supernatural is also known to be used to make children comply with being trafficked for domestic slavery or sexual exploitation. We write down any concerns and if the rituals and behaviour towards the child are a cause for concern either physically or emotionally, we will need to make a referral to children’s services. Online training in witchcraft and what to be aware of is available to our staff.
* Where we believe a child in our care or known to us may be affected by any of these factors, we follow the procedure for reporting child protection concerns.
* Where such evidence is apparent, the settings designated person makes a dated record of the details of the concern in the Safeguarding and Child protection file.
* We were further concerns to Children, Schools and Families on 0300 123 4043 and cooperate fully in any subsequent investigation.
* NB: In some cases, this may mean the police, or another agency identified by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.
* We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
* We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-18 as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees, or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be considered, but the setting may override the young person’s refusal to consent to share information if it feels that it is necessary to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been or to prevent harm to a child or adult. Sharing confidential information without consent is done only when not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
* Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), observes signs or signals that gives cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour; deterioration in general well-being; unexplained bruising, marks, or signs of possible abuse on the fact, that a member of staff:
	+ Listen to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action;
	+ Does not question the child;
	+ Makes a written record that forms and objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
		- The date and time of the observation or disclosure;
		- The exact words spoken by the child as far as possible;
		- The name of the person to whom the concern was reported with the date and time;
		- The name of any other person present at the time.
* These records are signed and dated and kept in the Safeguarding and Child Protection File, which is kept securely and confidentially.
* The Designated Person is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity.
* Where the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set out by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**Making a referral to the Children, Schools and Families:**

* We will follow the detailed guidelines as outlined on the Recognise, Respond and Refer flowchart (postcard and poster, 2020).
* We keep a copy of and display these documents.
* All members of staff are familiar with these documents and follow the procedures for recording and reporting.

**Informing parents:**

* Parents are normally the first point of contact. We discuss concerns with parents to gain their view of events unless we feel this may put the child in greater danger.
* We inform parents when we make a record of concerns in their child’s file and that we also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding concern.
* If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to social care, parents are informed while the referral will be made, except where the guidance of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed in greater danger.
* This will usually be the case where the parent is likely the abuser. In these cases, the social workers will inform parents.

**Liaison with other agencies:**

* We work within the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines.
* We have a copy of ‘Recognise, Respond and Refer, 2020 on display for parents and staff.
* We have an electronic version of ‘What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused’ for parents and staff and all staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
* We notify the registration authority (OFSTED) of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children or where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff (whether the allegation’s related to harm or abuse committed on our premises or elsewhere). Notifications to OFSTED are made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made.
* We know how to obtain contact details for the local National Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

**Allegations against staff:**

* We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the provision, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
* We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, or any other person working with the children, which includes:
	+ Inappropriate sexual comments
	+ Excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities, or
	+ Inappropriate sharing of images.
* We follow the guidance of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership when responding to any complaint that a member of staff, or volunteer within the provision, lor anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, has abused a child.
* We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, may have taken, or is taking place by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
* We refer any such complaint within 1 working day to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to investigate. We also report any such alleged incident to OFSTED and what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
* We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by Children, Schools & Families, and the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in conjunction with the police.
* Where the management team and LADO agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the co-owners will suspend the member of staff on full pay, or the volunteer, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process.
* All staff are made aware of our Whistle Blowing procedures, as part of their staff induction. Details can be found in the staff Code of Conduct Policy.

**Disciplinary action:**

* Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) of relevant information so that individuals who pose a threat to children (and vulnerable groups), can be identified, and barred from working with these groups, therefore, meeting the requirements of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

**Training:**

* We seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they can recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals.
* We ensure that designated persons receive training in accordance with that recommended by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.
* We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting.

**Curriculum:**

* We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social, and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be *strong, resilient, and listened to* and that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
* We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for the individual, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
* We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

**Confidentiality:**

* All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**Support to families:**

* We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff, and volunteers in the group.
* We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and always liaising with Children, Schools & Families.
* We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
* We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child’s social care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, after any investigation.
* Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

**The Prevent Duty & Promoting British Values:**

* See Policy 9.2 for more details
* British Values are defined as
	+ Democracy
	+ The rule of law
	+ Individual liberty & mutual respect
	+ Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
* We demonstrate these values through the management and implementation of the EYFS and through our policies relating to Equality, Behaviour and Safeguarding with which the Prevent Duty is entirely consistent.
* Our Management Team have completed online training to increase their knowledge in relation to their duties and responsibilities, including online training and/or WRAP workshops run by Hertfordshire County Council.

**Key contacts/documents:**

* Children’s Services: 0300 123 4043
* Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01992 55 54 20
* Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP):
	+ HSCP Office, Room 127, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DF
	+ 01992 588 757
	+ admin.lscb@hertscc.gov.uk
* Ofsted: 0300 123 1231
* Ofsted whistle-blowing helpline: 0300123 3155
* email: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
* Recognise, Respond and Refer poster and postcard, March 2017
* Police 999 in emergency, Police Anti-terrorist hotline: 0800789321

Channel Awareness training:<http://course.ncalt.com/channel_General_Awareness/01/index.html>

Channel Referral form to be sent to the PREVENT Team at prevent@herts.pnn.police.uk

‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018

Review date Manager Signed Next Review date

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