

## Safeguarding

As an Early Years setting, we aim to keep children safe by adopting the highest possible standards and taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm. Safeguarding is about more than child protection. Child protection is specifically about protecting children and young people from suspected abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is much wider than child protection. It includes everything an organisation can do to keep children and young people safe, including minimizing the risk of harm and accidents and taking action to tackle safety concerns.

### Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments of the Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy, which incorporates responding to child protection concerns.

All staff and volunteers must have a DBS check carried out before starting work at TRACKS. These DBS checks are then added to the update service and re-checked yearly by the Centre Coordinator.

#### *Key commitment 1*

We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

- Group provision: Our designated person (a member of staff) who co-ordinates child, young person and vulnerable adult protection issues is:  
Jane Wagstaff Smith
- When the setting 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. – Gaby Vallory
- Our designated officer (a member of the management team) who oversees this work is:  
Alexa Allen (Trustee)
- The designated person, the suitably trained deputy and the designated officer ensure they have relevant links with statutory organisations with regard to safeguarding.
- The designated person (and the person who deputises for them) understands HSCB (Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board) safeguarding procedures, attends

online safety (including use of cameras and mobile phones) and whistleblowing. All staff have access to a copy of the staff handbook.

- Children have a key person to build a supportive, trusting relationship with and the keyworker will address any concerns or non-verbal behaviours that they may have in an age appropriate way.
- All staff understand our policy on promoting positive behaviour and follow it in relation to children showing aggression towards other children.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing resources are provided to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

### **Safer Recruitment**

- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks and other suitability checks are carried out for staff and volunteers prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children. The DBS checks are then added to the update service to ensure that these can be checked yearly.
- Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks are carried out on anyone living or working on the premises.

### **Volunteers**

- Volunteers must:
  - be aged 17 or over;
  - be considered competent and responsible;
  - receive a robust induction and regular supervisory meetings;
  - be familiar with all the settings policies and procedures;
  - be fully checked for suitability if they are to have unsupervised access to the children at any time.
  - This relationship between volunteers, their manager and TRACKS is built on mutual trust.
- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
  - the criminal records disclosure reference number;

- We keep a written record of all complaints and concerns including details of how they were responded to.
- We ensure that robust risk assessments are completed, that they are seen by all relevant staff and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, in line with our health and safety policy.
- The designated officer will support the designated person to undertake their role adequately and offer advice, guidance, supervision and support.
- The designated person will inform relevant authorities at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, and will not delay any referrals being made to children's social care, or where appropriate, the LADO, Ofsted or RIDDOR.

### ***Key commitment 2***

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents, allegations or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (HMG, 2015) and the Care Act 2014.

### ***Responding to suspicions of abuse***

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- We ensure that all staff have an understanding of the additional vulnerabilities that arise from special educational needs and/or disabilities, plus inequalities of race, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation or culture, and that these receive full consideration in relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through:
  - significant changes in their behaviour;
  - deterioration in their general well-being;
  - their comments or behaviour which may give cause for concern, or the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure);
  - changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play;
  - unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; and
  - any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
- We understand how to identify children who may be in need of early help, how to access services for them



- We are aware of the mandatory duty that applies to teachers, and health workers to report cases of Female Genital Mutilation to the police. We are also aware that Early Years practitioners should follow local authority published safeguarding procedures to respond to FGM and other safeguarding issues, which involves contacting police if a crime of FGM has been or may be about to be committed.

### **County Lines**

- We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care, we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.
- If we become concerned that a child may be a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking we will refer to the National Referral Mechanism, as soon as possible and refer and/or seek advice to the local authority children's social work service and/or police.
- We will be alert to the threats children may face from outside their families, such as that posed by organised crime groups such as county lines and child sexual exploitation, online use and from within peer groups and the wider community.
- Where we believe that a child in our care or that is known to us may be affected by any of these factors we follow the procedures below for reporting child protection and child in need concerns and follow the HSCB procedures, or when they come into force replacing the HSCB, we will follow the local procedures as published by the local safeguarding partners.

### **Chronology of Concerns**

- Where such indicators are apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the member of staff who is acting as the designated person. The information is stored in a confidential concerns file.

### **Complaints/Whistleblowing**

- The member of staff acting as the designated person is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and always within one working day.
- Where the Local Safeguarding Children Board or local safeguarding partners safeguarding procedures stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

### ***Making a referral to the local authority children's social care team***

- We keep forms designed for recording concerns or information in a confidential file for all staff to use if they have concerns. The DSL will decide when referrals should be made to children's services.

### ***Escalation process***

- If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will follow the HSCB escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.
- We will follow local procedures published by the HSCB or safeguarding partners to resolve professional disputes.

### ***Informing parents***

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are normally discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child or other person at risk, or may interfere with the course of a police investigation, or may unduly delay the referral, or unless it is otherwise unreasonable to seek consent. Advice will be sought from social care, or in some circumstances police, where necessary.
- Parents are informed when we make a record of concerns in their child's file and that we also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding a concern.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to social care, parents are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk.

- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, volunteer or any other person living or working on the premises, 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 will recognise and respond to allegations that a person who works with children 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
- We respond to any concerns raised by staff and volunteers who know how to escalate their concerns if they are not satisfied with our response
- 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 immediately to a senior manager within the organisation and the Local Authority Childrens' Services – [Tel:- 0300 123 4043](tel:03001234043).
- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted (unless advised by Children's Services that this is unnecessary due to the incident not meeting the threshold), as well as 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's social care in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management team and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended 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. Where it is appropriate and practical and agreed with LADO, we will seek to offer an alternative to suspension for the duration of the investigation, if an alternative is available that will safeguard children and not place the affected staff or volunteer at risk.



strong, resilient and listened to and so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.

- We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for individuals, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.


### ***Confidentiality***

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners and in line with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and Working Together 2018.

### ***Support to families***

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, information sharing, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the local children's social care team.
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- We will engage with any child in need plan or early help plan as agreed.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure, and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

- Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (HMG, 2015)
- Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings, (Ofsted, 2016)

This policy was adopted on behalf	TRACKS autism	<i>(name of provider)</i>
On	March 2023	<i>(date)</i>
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Alexa Pickergill	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Chairperson	

\*A 'young person' is defined as 16 to 19 years old – in our setting they may be a student, worker, volunteer or parent.

## Appendix – COVID 19

TRACKS will contact all families in the event of a full lockdown and the setting is closed. We will contact them at regular intervals to ensure that all families are coping and offer supported where necessary and available.

When the setting re-opens, if some families choose not to return during and outbreaks of COVID 19, TRACKS will contact them regularly to ensure they are coping and offer support where necessary and available until they feel safe to return to the setting.