SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

Kingshurst Caterpillars Playgroup 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. We must be alert to any issues for concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere. We aim to: -

- Create an environment in our playgroup which encourages children to develop a positive self-image, regardless of race, language, religion, culture, or home background;
- Help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults;
- Encourage children to develop a sense of independence;
- Enable children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches;
- Work with parents to build their understanding of and commitment to the welfare of all our children.

Designated Person

- Our designated person who coordinates child protection issues is **Kerie Drinkwater.** In the absence of the Playgroup Manager, **Alison Kelly** will coordinate.

Working with other Agencies

- We work within the Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines.
- We have a copy of Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines available for staff and parents to see.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority on child protection issues, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the playgroup and social services to work well together.
- If a referral is to be made to the authorities, we act within Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership guidelines in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.
- We notify the registration authority (*OFSTED*) of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which affect the wellbeing of children.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.
We respond when:

- children may be suffering from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, as demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or significant changes in their behaviour, or deterioration in child's general well-being or appearance.
- there is unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect.
- there are reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the playgroup, for example in the child's home or changes in known adults' behaviour.
- there is inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any other person working with the children. For example, inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; inappropriate sharing of images.

How we respond:

- We allow investigation to be carried out with sensitivity. Members of playgroup staff take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to children or ask questions of children.
- Where such evidence is apparent, a dated record of the details of concerns is made and discussed with the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- We refer concerns to Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation, which may include the police.

Disclosures

Where a child makes comments (disclosure) to a member of staff that gives cause for concern, or shows signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour, deterioration in general well-being, unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect, that member of staff:

- listens to the child and offers the child reassurance;
- gives assurance that she or he will take action;

- does not question the child.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

Staff make a record of:

- the child's name;
- the child's address;
- the age of the child;
- the date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
- the observation or disclosure ensuring that it is objective;
- the exact words spoken by the child;
- the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time;
- the names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in a separate confidential file. The records need to be kept until the child's 21st birthday due to the possibility of legal action.

All members of staff know the procedures for recording and reporting.

Making a referral

There may be occasions when staff have serious concerns and believe that a child is at risk of serious harm. In this case the designated member of staff will contact without delay Solihull Local Children Board on the –

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – 0121 788 4300
Out of hours 0121 605 6060

Informing Parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact.
- If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership does not allow this.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases, the investigating officers will inform parents.

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 Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Attendance/Absence Concerns

- We monitor children's attendance and note children's absences. Parents are asked to telephone or text the playgroup on the first morning of any absence to advise us of the reason why and anticipated date of return.
- Parents are asked to advise us in advance of any other absences, for example, hospital appointment, speech therapy etc or any planned holidays, so that staff are aware the child will be absent on a certain day.
- On the first day of an absence and having not heard from a parent, the playgroup will telephone to confirm the child's absence.
- If a child is not attending regularly or there are patterns of non-attendance, the playgroup manager will discuss the issue with the child's parents.
- If non-attendance continues, checks can be made with Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership to see if child is known to them.
- The playgroup must also notify the Solihull's Family Information Service if a funded two-year-old stops attending.
- Each term the playgroup manager will ask parents, by supplying new registration forms and online by Dojo, to confirm that information concerning addresses and telephone numbers is up-to-date. Contact records will be changed if necessary.

Support to families

- Our playgroup takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff, and volunteers in the group.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children, e.g. the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Our playgroup will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child only if appropriate under the guidance of Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- With the provision that the care and safety of the child is paramount, we do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.
- During any period of lockdown when playgroup has to be closed for the majority of children, the playgroup manager will keep in touch with parents by a weekly phone call and staff will prepare activities and materials to be delivered to children's homes. Staff will also post videos of songs and stories on Facebook.

Allegations against Staff, Volunteers or Trustees

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff, volunteers or trustees within the playgroup which may include an allegation of abuse.
- The Whistleblowing Policy outlines how employees can raise concerns internally or at an LA level and disclose information about staff, volunteers, or committee members which they believe shows malpractice or inappropriate behaviour
- We follow the guidance of Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership when responding to any complaint that a member of staff, volunteer or trustee has abused a child.
- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff, volunteer or trustee within playgroup that may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- The Playgroup Manager or in the absence of the Manager the Deputy Manager has a duty to report such complaints to; -

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – 07795128638

- Make it clear that it is a LADO issue and the call will be put through to Duty Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).
- We also report to OFSTED any such alleged incidents and what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this within 14 days; -

OFSTED – 0300 123 4666

- We will co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management committee and Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the chairperson will suspend the member of staff, volunteer or trustee 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.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Staffing and Volunteering

- We ensure all staff and parents are made aware of our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the playgroup are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

- We must have regard to the Government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Solihull safe guarding children partnership and, in emergencies, the police.
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out Enhanced Disclosures DBS checks before posts can be confirmed.
- Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants will know why and can challenge incorrect information.
- We abide by *OFSTED* requirements in respect of references and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the playgroup or has access to the children.
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised.
- We abide by section 35 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Act 2006 requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the playgroup.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the playgroup so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Kingshurst Caterpillars Playgroup has a Mobile Phone, Camera, Ipad, Computer and Social Media policy and a Prevent policy.
- If staff socialise outside the playgroup environment with parents, either in person or via social networking sites, they understand that any allegations made against them may affect their further employment within the playgroup.

Disciplinary Action

- Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the playgroup or internally disciplined because of misconduct relating to a child, we notify the Disclosure & Barring Service so that their name may be included on the Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Barred List.

Training

- All staff and Trustees have undertaken Level One Safeguarding training provided by Solihull Early Years to ensure that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect which may include:
    - significant changes in children's behaviour;
    - deterioration in children's general well-being;
    - unexplained bruising, marks, or signs of possible abuse;
    - children's comments which give cause for concern;
    - any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, e.g. in the child's home;
    - inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff or any other person working with the children.
- Our named persons for safeguarding have undertaken Level 2 training.
- All new staff members employed will receive Safeguarding Training within 16 weeks of their employment commencing which is accessed by the Early Years Setting training information.
- We ensure that all staff and volunteers know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the playgroup.
- Procedures are explained to volunteers during their induction.

Planning

- The layout of the playroom allows for the constant supervision of children so they are always within sight and hearing of staff.
- When the garden is in use, there are always members of staff supervising play.

Curriculum

- We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our planning, so that children can develop understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the playgroup 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 appropriate for the ages and stages of our children.

The legal framework for this work is:

Primary Legislation

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974
- Children Act 1989
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Children Act (Every Child Matters) 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Group Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Secondary Legislation

- Race Relations Regulations 1976
- Human Rights Act 1999
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Criminal Justice & Court Services Act 2000
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Equalities Act 2006

Updated: May 2009, Sept 2010, January 2012, Sept 2012, Sept 2013, April 2014, January 2017 July 2018, November 2019; January 2020; July 2020; January 2021, January 2022, January 2023, January 2024, January 2025.

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURE

IF IT WORRIES YOU: SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

Childcare workers often develop close relationships with the children in their care. They will often sense that something is wrong and they may well be the person a child will confide in.

Procedure for all staff, volunteers, parent and voluntary committee if they suspect a child is being abused:

1) First discuss your concerns with the designated member of staff of Kingshurst Caterpillars Playgroup for safeguarding children. Our designated person who coordinates child protection issues is **Kerie Drinkwater**. In the absence of the Playgroup Manager the Deputy Playgroup Leader **Alison Kelly** will coordinate.

2) Observation sheets with diagrams are provided for anyone who suspects child abuse to enter their observations and actions as soon as possible after their concern is raised.

3) We encourage children and parents to talk to us if they are worried, just as we usually talk to parents if we are concerned about anything to do with their child.

Making a referral

There may be occasions when staff have serious concerns and believe that a child is at risk of serious harm. In this case the designated member of staff would contact without delay Solihull Local Children Board on the –

Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)– 0121 788 4333
Out of hours 0121 605 6060

- A template chart on "How to make a referral" is displayed on the playgroup's notice board.
- **In circumstances where a child volunteers / discloses information about abuse, listen to the child BUT DO NOT QUESTION HIM / HER. Staff will need to make the child aware that they may not be able to keep the child's disclosure confidential.**
- It is not the responsibility of any member of Kingshurst Caterpillars to investigate the suspected abuse. Social Services and the Police are specially trained for these situations.
- Strict confidence must be maintained at all times and all staff will co-operate with any investigation and will act in accordance with the wishes of the Police and Social Services. *OFSTED* also needs to be informed of the situation.
- Allegations against a staff member or volunteer must be taken seriously; this includes allegations/ suspicions of child abuse relating to behaviour at work, home or in any other setting.
- If a member of staff were to be under suspicion, the registered person of the playgroup would act in accordance with the wishes of the Police, *OFSTED* and Solihull Safeguarding children partnership.

This may mean suspending staff from duty while the investigation is carried out.

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