

# Acorn Pre-school and the Mighty Oaks Clubs, Shefford

## Policy & Procedure for safeguarding children and Child Protection

---

### Safeguarding Children and Child Protection

**Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection**  
 Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

#### Policy statement

At Acorn we work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of all the children and to give them all the very best start in life. Our Safeguarding Policy is based on the following three key commitments.

#### EYFS key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning & Development
1.3 Keeping safe	2.1 Respecting each other 2.2 Parents as partners	3.4 The wider context	4.4 Personal, social and emotional development

#### Procedures

##### Key commitment 1

- We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children are protected from abuse and harm.
- Lynn Meadows is our designated person and co-ordinates any child protection issues and the designated person ensures that the committee is kept up to date about any safeguarding issues at our regular meetings.
- Our chairperson and the committee oversee any child protection issues as and when required.
- We ensure all staff understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of our policies and where they can be found, online and in the lobby.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding, they are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, and understand that it is their professional duty to ensure safeguarding concerns are reported to the local authority children's social work team or the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).
- All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any safeguarding concerns and know not to just take things at face value but can be respectfully sceptical.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing is provided to meet the needs of the children.
- Applicants for posts within Acorn and Mighty Oaks are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

- Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) and other suitability checks are carried out for staff and volunteers prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified or unsuitable person works at Acorn and Mighty Oaks or has access to the children.
- Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised.
- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
  - the criminal records disclosure reference number
  - the date the disclosure was obtained
  - details of who obtained it.
- All staff and volunteers are informed 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).
- All staff and volunteers are required to notify us if anyone in their household (including family members, lodgers, partners etc.) has any relevant convictions, court orders, reprimands and warnings or has been barred from, or had registration refused or cancelled in relation to any childcare provision, or have had orders made in relation to care of their children.
- We notify the DBS 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.
- Procedures are in place to record the details of visitors to Acorn and Mighty Oaks.
- Security steps are taken to ensure that we have control over who comes into Acorn and Mighty Oaks so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Steps are taken to ensure children are not photographed or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child.
- Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- The designated person has responsibility for ensuring that there is an adequate e-safety policy in place.
- 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 and signed by all relevant staff and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, in line with our health and safety policy.
- The designated person will inform the Chair and/or committee at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, however this will not delay any referrals being made to the children's social worker services, 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).

## Responding to suspicions of abuse

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, and neglect.
- 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 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
  - any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
- We consider factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parent's drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parent's 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 linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, such as through internet abuse, Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation; that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision.
- We are 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.
- Where we believe that a child in our care or that is known to us may be affected by any of these factors we will follow the procedures below for reporting child protection concerns and follow the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) procedures.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- In the event that a member of staff or volunteer disagrees with the decision made by the designated person with regard to whether or not a referral should be made, they should either speak directly to the chair person or, where this is not possible, make the referral themselves.
- We refer concerns to the local authority children's social care department and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. NB In some cases this may mean the police or another agency identified by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to the children or by asking questions of children.
- We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-19 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 taken into account, but we 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 where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.

- We have a whistle blowing policy in place.

### **Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures**

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes 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, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action
  - does not question the child
  - makes a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes: the date and time of the observation or the 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; and the names of any other person present at the time.
  - These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file, which is kept securely and confidentially.
- The designated person is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and within 1 working day.
- We may seek advice from or refer any concerns to the Intake and Assessment Team and we will cooperate fully in any subsequent investigation. In some cases this may mean the police or another agency as identified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, may become involved.
- Where the LSCB stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we will include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by them.

### **Informing parents**

Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child in greater danger.

- If appropriate, we will discuss our concerns with parents. If we consider the child is at risk, the Intake and Assessment Team will become our first point of contact and we will follow their advice.
- 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 guidance of the Local 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 the likely abuser
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk the designated person will seek advice from children's social work services, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.

### **Liaison with other agencies**

- We work within the LSCB guidelines.
- The current version of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' is available for parents and staff and all staff are familiar with what they need to do if they have concerns.

- We notify 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 allegations relate 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.
- Contact details for the local NSPCC are displayed on the information sheet received from the council.

### **Allegations against staff**

- All parents know are made aware of how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers at Acorn, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff or volunteer, which includes:
  - inappropriate sexual comments
  - excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities
  - inappropriate sharing of images
- We follow the guidance of the LSCB when responding to any complaint that a member of staff or volunteer within Acorn has abused a child.
- We ensure that all staff or volunteers know how to raise concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within Acorn. 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 Acorn, may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We refer any such complaint immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Rosemary Webster to investigate. Her contact number is 0300 300 4833.
- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted, 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.

### **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 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.

### **Key commitment 3**

We are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout our training and learning programmes for adults. We are also committed to empowering young children, through our early childhood curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

## **Training**

- Training opportunities are sought for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to 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.
- The designated person receives training in accordance with that recommended by the LSCB, the designated person has attended training enabling them to hold their own safeguarding training.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the provision.

## **Planning**

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision and no child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

## **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 so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create 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 LSCB.

## **Support to families**

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers.
- We make parents aware of our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow any Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social care worker.
- 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 our Confidentiality and Client Access to Records policy and procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the LSCB.

## Legal framework

### Primary legislation

Children Act (1989 s47)  
Protection of Children Act (1999)  
Data Protection Act (1998)  
The Children Act (Every Child Matters) (2004)  
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)  
Childcare Act 2006

### Secondary legislation

Sexual Offences Act (2003)  
Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)  
Equalities Act (2010)  
Data Protection Act (1998) Non Statutory Guidance  
Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009  
Children and Families Act 2014  
Serious Crime Act 2015

### Further guidance

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)  
What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (DfE 2015))  
Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH 2000)  
The Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: A Guide for Practitioners (CWDC 2010)  
Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2007)  
Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners providing Safeguarding Services (DfE 2015)  
Disclosure and Barring Service: [www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check](http://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check)  
Keeping Children Safe in Education (2015)

---

This policy gained staff consent on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015

This policy was the subject of parent consultation between 6<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016

This policy was adopted at a minuted full meeting of the Committee held on

---

Confirmed on behalf of Acorn Pre-school and the Mighty Oaks Clubs

Signature .....

Position ..... Date .....