

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. We will take all necessary steps to keep our children safe and well, and ensure they are protected from harm. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Essex Social Care and, in emergencies, the police. The policy also complements our Behaviour Policy, which includes information on positive handling, and our Staff Code of Conduct.

1.1 Children's rights and entitlements

Policy statement

- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, cultural traditions and home background.
- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient, and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- We help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- We work with parents to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

What it means to promote children's rights and entitlements to be '*strong, resilient and listened to*'.

To be strong means to be:

- secure in their foremost attachment relationships, where they are loved and cared for by at least one person who is able to offer consistent, positive and unconditional regard and who can be relied on
- safe and valued as individuals in their families and in relationships beyond the family, such as day care or school
- self-assured and form a positive sense of themselves – including all aspects of their identity and heritage;
- included equally and belong in our setting and in community life
- confident in their own abilities and proud of their achievements
- progressing optimally in all aspects of their development and learning
- part of a peer group in which they learn to negotiate, develop social skills and an identity as global citizens, respecting the rights of others in a diverse world
- able to represent themselves and participate in aspects of service delivery that affects them, as well as aspects of key decisions that affect their lives

To be resilient means to:

- be sure of their self-worth and dignity
- be able to be assertive and state their needs effectively
- be able to overcome difficulties and problems
- be positive in their outlook on life
- be able to cope with challenge and change
- have a sense of justice towards themselves and others
- develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others
- be able to represent themselves and others in key decision making processes

To be listened to means:

- adults who are close to children recognise their need and right to express and communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas
- adults who are close to children are able to tune in to their verbal, sign and body language in order to understand and interpret what is being expressed and communicated
- adults who are close to children are able to respond appropriately and, when required, act upon their understanding of what children express and communicate
- adults respect children's rights and facilitate children's participation and representation in imaginative and child centred ways in all aspects of core services

This policy was adopted by

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Chair

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

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1.2 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Policy statement

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children, young people* and vulnerable adults. Our Safeguarding Policy is based on the three key commitments of the Early Years Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy. Everyone working in early years services should know how to recognise and respond to signs of possible abuse or harm (see Appendix A).

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.

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.

- Our designated leads (two members of staff) who co-ordinates child, young person and vulnerable adult protection issues are: **Donna McWilliams and Wendy Ratcliffe**, there will always be a designated person on site for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns with.

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- Our designated officer (a member of the committee) who oversees this work is: **Carol Nice (Chairperson)**

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- The designated leads and the designated officer ensure they have relevant links with statutory and voluntary organisations with regard to safeguarding.
 - The designated persons understands Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) safeguarding procedures, attends relevant LSPs training at least every two years and refreshes their knowledge of safeguarding at least annually.
 - We ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too. When new staff, volunteers or visitors join our setting they are informed of

the safeguarding arrangements in place, the name of the Lead Practitioner and the Deputy Lead Practitioner, and how to share concerns with them.

- All staff understand that safeguarding is their responsibility.
- All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, are alert to potential indicators and signs of abuse and neglect and understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding and child protection concerns are reported to the local authority children's social care team or the NSPCC. They receive updates on safeguarding at least annually. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they must act on them immediately and speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead/s, - they do not assume that others have taken action.
- 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.
- All staff understand the principles of early help (as defined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 2018) and are able to identify those children and families who may be in need of early help and enable them to access it.
- All staff understand the thresholds of significant harm and understand how to access services for families, including for those families who are below the threshold for significant harm, according to arrangements published by the LSPs.
- All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, and understand relevant safeguarding legislation, statutory requirements and local safeguarding partner requirements and ensure that any information they may share about parents and their children with other agencies is shared appropriately and lawfully.
- A member of staff must never guarantee confidentiality to anyone about a safeguarding concern (including children and parents/carers) or promise to keep a secret.
- We will support families to receive appropriate early help by sharing information with other agencies in accordance with statutory requirements and legislation.
- We will share information lawfully with safeguarding partners and other agencies where there are safeguarding concerns.
- We will be transparent about how we lawfully process data.
- All staff understand how to escalate their concerns in the event that they feel either the local authority and/or their own organisation has not acted adequately to safeguard and know how to follow local safeguarding procedures to resolve professional disputes between staff and organisations.
- All staff understand what the organisation expects of them in terms of their required behaviour and conduct, and follow our policies and procedures on positive behaviour, online safety (including use of cameras and mobile phones), whistleblowing and dignity at work.
- Children have a key person to build a relationship with, and are supported to articulate any worries, concerns or complaints 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.
- 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.
- 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 must:
 - be aged 14 or over;
 - be considered competent and responsible;
 - receive a robust induction and regular supervisory meetings;
 - be familiar with all the settings policies and procedures;
 - volunteers do not work unsupervised at any time.
- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
 - the criminal records disclosure reference number;
 - certificate of good conduct or equivalent where a UK DBS check is not appropriate;
 - the date the disclosure was obtained; and
 - 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).
- From 31 August 2018, staff and volunteers in childcare settings that are not based on domestic premises are **not** required to notify their line manager if anyone in their household (including family members, lodgers, partners etc.) has any relevant convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands or 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. For childminders and childcare provided from domestic settings they will be required to notify if anyone in their household has any relevant convictions, court orders or reprimands or had registration refused or cancelled in relation to childcare provision or have had certain Orders made in relation to the care of their children in accordance with the Childcare Disqualification and Childcare Regulations 2018, and Disqualification under the Childcare Act guidance effective from 31 August 2018.
- Staff receive regular supervision, which includes discussion of any safeguarding issues, and their performance and learning needs are reviewed regularly.
- In addition to induction and supervision, staff are provided with clear expectations in relation to their behaviour [outlined in the employee handbook].

- We notify the Disclosure and Barring Service 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 the setting.
- Security steps are taken to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting 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 e.g. newspaper articles, websites regarding fundraising. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child. Staff do not use personal cameras or filming equipment to record images.
- Personal mobile phones are not used where children are present.
- The designated person in the setting has responsibility for ensuring that there is an adequate online 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 officer will support the designated person to undertake their role adequately and offer advice, guidance, supervision and support.
- The designated person will inform the designated officer at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern, however this should 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 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 understand that we should refer a child who meets the s17 Children Act 1989 child in need definition to local authority children's social work services
 - We understand that we should refer any child who may be at risk of significant harm to local authority children's social work services.
 - We are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and parent's learning disability.
 - We are aware that children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered and when we know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we inform our local authority children's social care team.
 - We are prepared to take action if we have concerns about the welfare of a child who fails to arrive at a session when expected. The designated person will take immediate action to contact the child's parent to seek an explanation for the child's absence and be assured that the child is safe and well. If no contact is made with the child's parents and the designated person has reason to believe that the child is at risk of significant harm, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately and LSPs procedures are followed. If the child has current involvement with social care the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
 - We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision, such as abuse of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and radicalisation or extremism.
 - In relation to radicalisation and extremism, we follow the Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales published by the Home Office and LSPs procedures on responding to radicalisation.
 - The designated person completes online Channel training, online Prevent training and attends local WRAP training where available to ensure they are familiar with the local protocol and procedures for responding to concerns about radicalisation.
 - We are aware of the mandatory duty that applies to teachers, and health workers to report cases of FGM 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.
 - 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 local procedures as published by the local safeguarding partners.
- 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 on the child's personal file.
- In the event that a staff member or volunteer is unhappy with the decision made of the designated person in relation to whether to make a safeguarding referral they must follow escalation procedures.
- We refer concerns about children's welfare to the local authority children's social care team 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 partners.
- We respond to any disclosures sensitively and appropriately and take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children (although we may check out/clarify the details of what we think they have told us with them).
- 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 or neglect 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 in an age appropriate way, 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 where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- All staff are also aware that adults can also be vulnerable and know how to refer adults who are in need of community care services.
- All staff know that they can contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline if they feel that or organisation and the local authority have not taken appropriate action to safeguard a child and this has not been addressed satisfactorily through organisational escalation and professional challenge procedures.
- We have a whistleblowing policy in place.
- Staff/volunteers know they can contact the organisation Public Concern at Work for advice relating to whistleblowing dilemmas.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

- Our setting is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our setting and when these records should be shared with other agencies.
- 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, although it is OK to ask questions for the purposes of clarification;
 - 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. Any records relating to child protection are kept on an individual child protection file for that child (which is separate to any other child file). All child protection records are stored securely and confidentially until the child transfers to another educational setting.
- 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 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 partners.

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

- *Safeguarding Children* (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2013) contains procedures to help in making a referral to the local children's social care team, as well as template forms for recording concerns and to assist with making a referral.
- We keep a copy of this document alongside the procedures for recording and reporting set down by our local safeguarding partners, which we follow where local procedures differ from those of the Early Years Alliance.

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 LSPs escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.
- We will follow local procedures published by 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 partners does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser or where sexual abuse may have occurred.
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk (or interfere with a police response) the designated person should consider seeking advice from children's social care, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.

Liaison with other agencies and multi-agency working

- We work within the local safeguarding partners 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 have procedures for contacting the local authority regarding child protection issues and concerns about children's welfare, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and children's social care to work well together.
- 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 National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) are also kept.

Allegations against staff and persons in position of trust

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We ensure that all staff volunteers and anyone else working in the setting knows how to raise concerns that they may have about the conduct or behaviour of other people including staff/colleagues.
- We differentiate between allegations, and concerns about the quality of care or practice and complaints and have a separate process for responding to complaints.

- 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 (with children, adults, or vulnerable parents) 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 Designated Officer (LADO) as necessary to investigate and/or offer advice:

Telephone: 03330 139797 or lado@essex.gov.uk
- 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. 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.

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 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 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 (including child sexual exploitation) and neglect and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals. Training opportunities should also cover extra familial threats such as online risks, radicalisation and grooming, and how to identify and respond to families who may be in need of early help, and organisational safeguarding procedures.
- Designated person receives appropriate training, as recommended by the local safeguarding partners, every two years and refresh their knowledge and skills at least annually.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the provision.
- We ensure that all staff receive updates on safeguarding via emails, newsletters, online training and/or discussion at staff meetings at least once a year.

Planning

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being within sight and/or hearing of other staff or volunteers.

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 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 partners and in line with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, and Working Together 2018. In accordance with statutory requirements, where there is a child protection concern, this must be reported to the Lead Practitioner or Deputy Lead Practitioner and may require further referral to and subsequent investigation by appropriate authorities.
- Information on individual child protection cases may be shared by the Lead Practitioner or Deputy Lead Practitioner with other relevant staff members. This will be on a 'need to know' basis only and where it is in the child's best interests to do so.

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 partners.

Legal framework

Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- The Children Act (2004 s11)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Childcare Act (2006)
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018

Secondary legislation

- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (2018)
- Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations (2009)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)

Further guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HMG, 2018)
- What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG, 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 2008)
- Hidden Harm – Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users (ACMD, 2003)
- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners providing Safeguarding Services (DfE 2018)
- Disclosure and Barring Service: www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check
- Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (HMG, 2015)
- Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings, (Ofsted, 2016)
- Safeguarding Children (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2013)
- Safeguarding through Effective Supervision (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2013)
- The New Early Years Employee Handbook (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2016)
- People Management in the Early Years (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2016)

This policy was adopted by

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Chair

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

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. We will take all necessary steps to keep our children safe and well, and ensure they are protected from harm. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Essex Social Care and, in emergencies, the police. The policy also complements our Behaviour Policy, which includes information on positive handling, and our Staff Code of Conduct.

1.3 Looked after children

Policy statement

We are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff in our provision are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in our care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Children become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most looked after children will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s).

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has an impact on their emotional well-being. Most local authorities do not place children under five with foster carers who work outside the home; however, there are instances when this does occur or where the child has been placed with another family member who works. It is not appropriate for a looked after child who is under two years to be placed in a day care setting in addition to a foster placement.

We place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on two important concepts: attachment and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives, as the foundation for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and enable the development of positive dispositions for learning. For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

Principles

- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.

- We offer places for funded two-year-old (who are eligible) three and four-year-olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for a minimum of one month and that they will have formed a secure attachment to the carer.
- We will always offer 'stay and play' provision for a child who is two to five years old who is still settling with their foster carer, or who is only temporarily being looked after.
- Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer, we will continue to offer the placement for the child.

Procedures

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator.
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs.
- The designated person and the key person liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure that appropriate information is gained and shared.
- The setting recognises the role of the local authority children's social care department as the child's 'corporate parent' and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the setting, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- At the start of a placement there is a professional's meeting to determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- The care plan needs to consider issues for the child such as:
 - their emotional needs and how they are to be met;
 - how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed;
 - their sense of self, culture, language(s) and identity – and how this is to be supported;
 - their need for sociability and friendship;
 - their interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway; and
 - how any special needs will be supported.
- In addition the care plan will also consider:
 - how information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority (as the 'corporate parent') as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored;
 - what contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be at the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed;
 - what written reporting is required;
 - wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child to return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning; and

- with the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings and fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.
- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the 'proximity' stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a sufficient relationship with his or her key person for them to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.
- In the first two weeks after settling-in, the child's well-being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.
- Further observations about communication, interests and abilities will be noted to firm a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage prime and specific areas of learning and development.
- Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
- If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- The transition to school will be handled sensitively. The designated person and/or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the child's social worker as detailed in the care plan.

Further guidance

- Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)
- Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES 2005)
- Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

This policy was adopted by

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory

Chair

(e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. We will take all necessary steps to keep our children safe and well, and ensure they are protected from harm. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Essex Social Care and, in emergencies, the police. The policy also complements our Behaviour Policy, which includes information on positive handling, and our Staff Code of Conduct.

1.4 Uncollected child

Policy statement

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult by their expected collection time, we put into practice agreed procedures. The child will receive a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible.

We inform parents/carers of our procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their children will be properly cared for.

Procedures

- Parents are asked to provide the following specific information when their child starts attending our setting, which is recorded on our Registration Form:
 - Home address and telephone number - if the parents do not have a telephone, an alternative number must be given, perhaps a neighbour or close relative.
 - Place of work, address and telephone number (if applicable).
 - Mobile telephone number (if applicable).
 - Names, addresses, telephone numbers and signatures of adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting, for example a childminder or grandparent.
 - Who has parental responsibility for the child.
 - Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child.
- On occasions when parents are aware that they will not be at home or in their usual place of work, they inform us in writing of how they can be contacted.
- On occasions when parents, or the persons normally authorised to collect the child, are not able to collect the child, they provide us with written details of the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting their child. We agree with parents how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect their child.
- Parents are informed that if they are not able to collect the child as planned, they must inform us so that we can begin to take back-up measures. **Our contact telephone number is 01206 860467.**
- If a child is not collected at their expected collection time, we follow the procedures below:
 - The child's file is checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines.

- If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or at work.
- If this is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child - and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the Registration Form - are contacted.
- All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or nominated carers.
- The child does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or in their file.
- If no-one collects the child within 30 minutes of their expected collection time and there is no named contact who can be contacted to collect the child, we apply the procedures for uncollected children.
- If we have any cause to believe the child has been abandoned we contact the local authority children's social care team:
If the children's social care team is unavailable [or as our local authority advise] we will contact the local police]

Colchester Local police call - 101

Family Operations hub – 03456037627

Or the out of hours duty officer (where applicable):

03456061212 (after 5.30pm)

- After an additional 15 minutes if the child has not been collected, we will contact the above statutory agencies again.
 - The child stays at the setting in the care of two of our fully-vetted workers, one of whom will be our manager or deputy manager until the child is safely collected either by the parents or by a social care worker, or by another person specified by social care.
 - Social care will aim to find the parent or relative. If they are unable to do so, the child will become looked after by the local authority.
 - Under no circumstances will we go to look for the parent, nor leave the setting premises with the child.
 - We ensure that the child is not anxious and we do not discuss our concerns in front of them.
 - A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.
- Depending on circumstances, we reserve the right to charge parents for the additional hours worked.
 - Ofsted may be informed:

0300 123 1231

Named Early Years Education Partner **Kathryn Irvine - 07827976359**

This policy was adopted by
On
Date to be reviewed
Signed on behalf of the management committee
Name of signatory
Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

10th September 2013

Annually or where deemed necessary

Carol Nice

Carol Nice

Chair

Further information

- Safeguarding Children (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2013)

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. We will take all necessary steps to keep our children safe and well, and ensure they are protected from harm. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Essex Social Care and, in emergencies, the police. The policy also complements our Behaviour Policy, which includes information on positive handling, and our Staff Code of Conduct.

1.5 Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person/the relevant member of staff alerts our setting manager.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Our manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, our manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Our manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our [chair comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where appropriate.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.

- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s).
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team (where appropriate).
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Our chair, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with the nursery co-ordinator speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.

- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is our manager and the other should be our [chair or another representative of the management committee, director or owner]. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. Our remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly, but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Chair

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children. We will take all necessary steps to keep our children safe and well, and ensure they are protected from harm. If we have concerns about children's safety or welfare, we will notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means Essex Social Care and, in emergencies, the police. The policy also complements our Behaviour Policy, which includes information on positive handling, and our Staff Code of Conduct.

1.6 Online safety (inc. mobile phones and cameras)

Policy statement

We take steps to ensure that there are effective procedures in place to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from the unacceptable use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment or exposure to inappropriate materials in the setting.

Procedures

- Our designated persons responsible for co-ordinating action taken to protect children is:

Donna McWilliams Designated person / Wendy Ratcliffe Designated person

Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment

- Only ICT equipment belonging to the setting is used by staff and children.
- The designated person is responsible for ensuring all ICT equipment is safe and fit for purpose.
- All computers have virus protection installed.
- The designated person ensures that safety settings are set to ensure that inappropriate material cannot be accessed.

Internet access

- Children do not normally have access to the internet and never have unsupervised access.
- If staff access the internet with children for the purposes of promoting their learning, written permission is gained from parents who are shown this policy. We respect the wishes of all parents if they ask that their child does not have access to the internet.
- All children are limited to the amount of time spent on the internet e.g. 30 minutes maximum.
- The designated person has overall responsibility for ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded and risk assessments in relation to online safety are completed.
- Children are taught the following stay safe principles in an age appropriate way prior to using the internet;
 - only go on line with a grown up
 - be kind on line
 - keep information about me safely
 - only press buttons on the internet to things I understand

- tell a grown up if something makes me unhappy on the internet
- Designated persons will also seek to build children’s resilience in relation to issues they may face in the online world, and will address issues such as staying safe, having appropriate friendships, asking for help if unsure, not keeping secrets as part of social and emotional development in age-appropriate ways.
- If a second-hand computer is purchased or donated to the setting, the designated person will ensure that no inappropriate material is stored on it before children use it.
- All computers for use by children are located in an area clearly visible to staff.
- Children are not allowed to access social networking sites.
- Staff report any suspicious or offensive material, including material which may incite racism, bullying or discrimination to the Internet Watch Foundation at www.iwf.org.uk.
- Suspicions that an adult is attempting to make inappropriate contact with a child on-line is reported to the National Crime Agency’s Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre at www.ceop.police.uk.
- The designated person ensures staff have access to age-appropriate resources to enable them to assist children to use the internet safely.
- If staff become aware that a child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they discuss this with their parents and refer them to sources of help, such as the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or www.nspcc.org.uk, or Childline on 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk.

Email

- Children are not permitted to use email in the setting. Parents and staff are not normally permitted to use setting equipment to access personal emails.
- Staff do not access personal or work email whilst supervising children.
- Staff send personal information by encrypted email and share information securely at all times.

Mobile phones – children

- Children do not bring mobile phones or other ICT devices with them to the setting. If a child is found to have a mobile phone or ICT device with them, this is removed and stored in a locked drawer until the parent collects them at the end of the session.

Mobile phones – staff and visitors

- Personal mobile phones are not used by our staff in the main nursery room, outdoor play area or anywhere the children are. They will always be stored in a staff members bag or in the office.
- In an emergency, personal mobile phones may be used in an area where there are no children present, with permission from the manager.
- Our staff and volunteers ensure that the setting telephone number is known to family and other people who may need to contact them in an emergency.
- If our members of staff or volunteers take their mobile phones on outings, for use in case of an emergency, they must not make or receive personal calls, or take photographs of children. They must take themselves away from the group if they need to use them.

- Parents and visitors are requested not to use their mobile phones whilst on the premises. We make an exception if a visitor's company or organisation operates a lone working policy that requires contact with their office periodically throughout the day. Visitors will be advised of a quiet space where they can use their mobile phone, where no children are present.
- These rules also apply to the use of work-issued mobiles, and when visiting or supporting staff in other settings.
- Will not be used to take photographs, videos or audio recordings in our setting.

Cameras and videos

- Our staff and volunteers must not bring their personal cameras or video recording equipment into the setting.
- Photographs and recordings of children are only taken for valid reasons i.e. to record their learning and development, or for displays within the setting, with written permission received by parents (see the Registration form). Such use is monitored by the manager.
- Where parents request permission to photograph or record their own children at special events, general permission is gained from all parents for their children to be included (see the registration form). Parents are advised that they do not have a right to photograph anyone else's child or to upload photos of anyone else's children to social media without permission.
- If photographs of children are used for publicity purposes, parental consent must be given and safeguarding risks minimised, for example, ensuring children cannot be identified by name or through being photographed in a sweatshirt with the name of their setting on it.
- On the registration form parents/carers sign to say whether photos of their child are allowed to be used for media use or not.
- Parents/carers sign to say video recording can be used when relevant.

Social media

- Staff are advised to manage their personal security settings to ensure that their information is only available to people they choose to share information with.
- Staff should not accept service users, children and parents as friends due to it being a breach of expected professional conduct.
- In the event that staff name the organisation or workplace in any social media they do so in a way that is not detrimental to the organisation or its service users.
- Staff observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work
- Staff should not share information they would not want children, parents or colleagues to view.
- Staff should report any concerns or breaches to the designated person in their setting.
- Staff avoid personal communication, including on social networking sites, with the children and parents with whom they act in a professional capacity. If a practitioner and family are friendly prior to the child coming into the setting, this information is shared with the manager prior to a child attending and a risk assessment and agreement in relation to boundaries is agreed.

Electronic learning journals for recording children's progress

- Manager seeks permission from the nursery coordinator prior to using any online learning journal. A risk assessment is completed with details on how the learning journal is managed to ensure children are safeguarded. (Tapestry)
- Staff adhere to the guidance provided with the system at all times.

Use and/or distribution of inappropriate images

- Staff are aware that it is an offence to distribute indecent images. In the event of a concern that a colleague or other person is behaving inappropriately, the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy, in relation to allegations against staff and/or responding to suspicions of abuse, is followed
- Staff are aware that grooming children and young people on line is an offence in its own right and concerns about a colleague's or others' behaviour are reported (as above).

Further guidance

- NSPCC and CEOP *Keeping Children Safe Online* training: www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-expert-training/keeping-children-safe-online-course/
- Safeguarding Children (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2013)
- The New Early Years Employee Handbook (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2019)

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Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Chair

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

The safeguarding policy and procedures must include an explanation of the action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting

1.7 Whistle Blowing Policy

Definition: Whistle blowing is raising a concern about malpractice within an organisation or through an independent structure associated with it (UK Committee on Standards in Public Life).

Protection: As a member of the Early Years Alliance, Stepping Stones is committed to delivering a high quality pre-school service, promoting organisational accountability and maintaining public confidence.

Policy statement

This policy provides individuals in the workplace with protection from victimisation or punishment where they raise a genuine concern about misconduct or malpractice in the organisation. The policy is underpinned by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which encourages people to raise concerns about misconduct or malpractice in the workplace, in order to promote good governance and accountability in the public interest.

The Act covers behaviour, which amounts to:

- A criminal offence
- Failure to comply with any legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- Danger to health and safety of an individual and/or environment
- Deliberate concealment of information about any of the above

It is not intended that this policy be a substitute for, or an alternative to the group's formal Grievance Procedure, but is designed to nurture a culture of openness and transparency within the organisation, which makes it safe and acceptable for employees and volunteers to raise, in good faith, a concern they may have about misconduct or malpractice.

Employees and volunteers are entitled to expect fair and reasonable treatment from their employer and colleagues. This group has in place formal procedures that paid or unpaid staff can use if they feel they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against. Employees and volunteers can seek advice from a Trade Union, a lawyer, or other as they see fit.

We accept that there may be rare occasions in the organisation when situations arise which are illegal, improper or unethical, or which are otherwise in conflict with our codes of practice. The group is committed to providing paid and unpaid staff with an effective mechanism for dealing with such situations.

Any employee or volunteer who, acting in good faith, wishes to raise such a concern should normally report the matter to the nursery coordinator who will advise the employee or volunteer of the action he or she will take in response to the concerns expressed. Concerns should be investigated and resolved as quickly as possible.

If an employee or volunteer feels the matter cannot be discussed with the Nursery coordinator, he or she should report it to the Chairperson of the Committee. The Chairperson will decide, in consultation where necessary with EYA and/or Ofsted, what action is to be taken. This may include whether the issue raised can be dealt with through the group's own Grievance Procedure.

A disclosure in good faith to the Nursery coordinator Chairperson will be protected. Confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible and the employee or volunteer will not suffer any personal detriment as a result of raising a genuine concern about misconduct or malpractice within the organisation.

Notes to the policy: The Public Disclosure Act 1998 came into force in July 1999. The Act encourages people to raise concerns about malpractice in the workplace without fear of dismissal or victimisation, and helps to prevent cover up of serious malpractice.

Malpractice: applies to people at work raising genuine concerns about crime, civil offences (including negligence, breach of contract, breach of administration law), miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety or the environment and the cover up of any of these. It applies whether or not the information is confidential.

In addition to the employees, the policy applies to relief staff, trainees and student placements, and unpaid workers.

There are no restrictions under employment law on minimum length of service and age.

Under the Act, employees may seek legal advice on any concerns they have about malpractice.

The Act does not presently cover volunteers

This policy was adopted by

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group

On

10th September 2013

Date to be reviewed

Annually or where deemed necessary

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Carol Nice

Name of signatory

Carol Nice

Role of signatory (e.g. **chair**, director or owner)

Chair

