



Child Protection Statement and Policy

Arrangements for Review:

Jim Duncan is responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews. This policy was adopted in July 2010 and will be reviewed in **November 2011**

STATEMENT

Seashells Children's Centres' Child Protection Policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by The Children Act 1989 and 2004, The Early Years Foundation Stage, Sections 175 and 176 Education Act 2002 and related guidance including The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (1999) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006).

The staff and members of the Steering Group for Seashells Children's Centre take seriously our responsibility to promote the welfare and safeguard all the children and young people entrusted to our care. The policy has used the guidance in 'what to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2006).

The Designated Person for Child Protection or 'Safeguarding Lead' has overall responsibility for child protection practice in the Centre and is the Director, Jim Duncan.

As part of the ethos of the centre we are committed to:

- Maintaining children's welfare as our paramount concern
- Providing an environment in which children feel safe, secure, valued and respected; confident to talk openly and sure of being listened to
- Providing suitable support and guidance so that children have a range of appropriate adults who they feel confident to approach if they are in difficulties
- Using learning at the centre to provide opportunities for increasing self awareness, self esteem, assertiveness and decision making so that young children have a range of contacts and strategies to ensure their own protection and understand the importance of protecting others
- Working with parents to build an understanding of the centre's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children including the need for referral to other agencies in some situations
- Ensuring all staff are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and are aware of the Centre's procedures and lines of communication
- Monitoring children who have been identified as vulnerable or 'in need', including the need for protection; keeping confidential records which are stored securely and shared appropriately with other professionals. Child protection information is Data Protection Act exempt and will be shared on a need to know basis.
- Developing effective and supportive liaison with other agencies

This policy is in line with Kent Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures, which are available at:

www.clusterweb.org.uk/UserFiles/KSCB/File/Policies/KentMedway_ammended_by_LF_Aug_09.pdf

The Children's Centre staff's role and responsibility in Child Protection

Everyone involved in the care of young children has a role to play in their protection. As a member of staff in the Children's Centre, you are in a unique position to observe any changes in a child's behaviour or appearance. If you have any reason to suspect that a child in your care is being abused, or is likely to be abused, you have a 'duty of care' to take action on behalf of the child by following the Children's Centre Child Protection Policy.

The Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

- Co-ordinating child protection action within the centre
- Liaising with other agencies
- Ensuring the locally established procedures are followed including reporting and referral processes
- Acting as a consultant for other centre staff to discuss concerns
- Making referrals as necessary
- Maintaining a confidential record system
- Representing or ensuring the centre is represented at inter-agency meetings in particular Strategy Discussions and Child Protection Conferences
- Managing and monitoring the centre's part in child protection plans
- Ensuring all centre staff have received appropriate and up to date child protection training
- Liaising with other professionals

What is child abuse?

The Children Act 1989 refers to “Significant Harm” rather than abuse. However, abuse is any behaviour, action or inaction, which significantly harms the physical and/or emotional development of a child. A child may be abused by parents, other relatives or carers, professionals and other children, and can occur in any family, in any area of society, regardless of social class or geographical location.

Abuse falls into four main categories (The following definitions are from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006):

Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to the child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, injury in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse affects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may include interactions beyond the child’s developmental ability, overprotection, limitation of exploration or learning, and/or prevention of normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or exploitation and corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (i.e. rape or buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may occur in pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional needs.

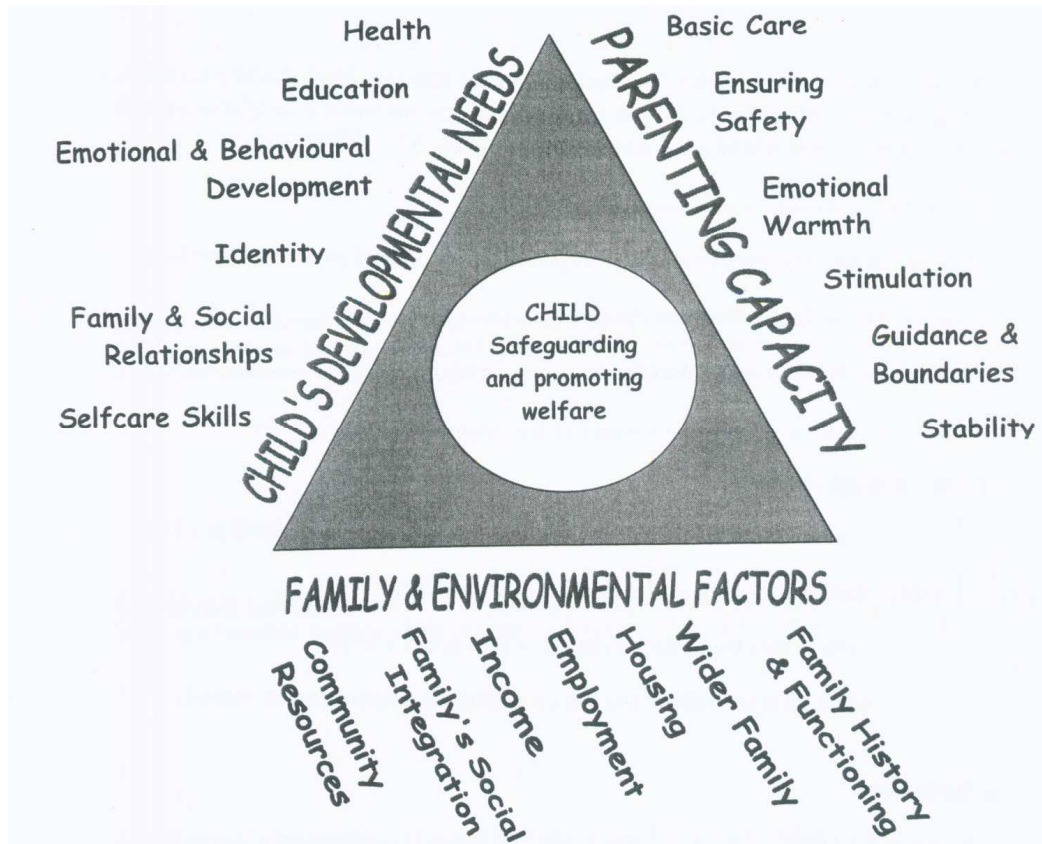
What may give cause for concern?

- Bruising on parts of the body which do not usually get bruised accidentally, e.g. around the eyes, behind the ears, back of the legs, stomach, chest, cheek and mouth (especially in a young baby), etc.
- Any bruising or injury to a very young, immobile baby
- Burns or scalds
- Bite marks
- Any injuries or swellings, which do not have a plausible explanation
- Bruising or soreness to the genital area
- Faltering growth, weight loss and slow development
- Unusual lethargy
- Any sudden uncharacteristic change in behaviour, e.g. child becomes either very aggressive or withdrawn
- A child whose play and language indicates a sexual knowledge beyond his/her years
- A child who flinches away from sudden movement
- A child who gives over rehearsed answers to explain how his/her injuries were caused
- An accumulation of a number of minor injuries and/or concerns
- A child who discloses something which may indicate he/she is being abused

Understanding the child's world

As a Children's Centre member of staff, you are familiar with the many factors which can affect how children learn, how they react, and how they develop. When you are concerned about any child, it is helpful to be familiar with government guidance to help agencies to work together in taking a common approach to assessment and service planning: the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. A child's developmental needs are affected in different ways by the parenting capacity of carers, and by the family and the environmental situation of the child.

Assessment Framework Triangle



How to share your concerns

Keep a factual note of any concerns, i.e. what you have observed and heard and ensure you complete a concerns form or 'Green Form'. These are found in the Safeguarding Folders located in:

- The Directors Office
- The Centre Managers Office
- The large upstairs Office
- Behind Nursery Reception
- Behind Main Reception

Discuss your concerns with the Safeguarding Lead **immediately**. In their absence the Duty Manager acts as the Safeguarding Lead and Main Reception can tell you who the Duty Manager is on any given day. If there are serious concerns and neither is available but immediate advice is needed then contact:

Leanna Baker - Children's Officer (Early Years) 01233 652149 or 07545 423299

Or you may seek a consultation from KCC Social Services for advice:

Kent Contact and Assessment Service, open 9am - 5pm Mondays to Fridays can be reached on 0845 330 2967. (Ask for “**A consultation with the duty social worker on a child protection issue**”.)

Out of Hours Social Services: **0845 7626777**

Always sign and date your records for future reference.

Initial concerns should be shared with the Safeguarding Lead who will, if appropriate, decide that the concerns should be shared with the child's parents, as there may be a perfectly innocent explanation for changes which you have observed, for example:

- A sudden change in behaviour could be due to the death or illness of a close family member or a pet
- Weight loss and/or failing to thrive could be a symptom of an illness
- A sibling or another child could have inflicted an injury accidentally

However, if:

- You suspect sexual abuse,
Or
- You do not get an explanation which you feel is consistent or acceptable from the parents/carer
Or
- You feel that discussing the issue with parents may put the child at further risk of significant harm
Or
- You think a criminal offence has been committed

Then you must discuss your concerns with the Safeguarding Lead without delay.

Concerns or uncertainties

There may be occasions when you have concerns about a child, which do not appear to justify a referral of suspected child abuse, but nonetheless leave you feeling uncomfortable. In these circumstances, following consultation with the Safeguarding Lead or Duty Manager, you must telephone either:

- **Children's Officer (Early Years), Leanna Baker, Children's Safeguarding team** on 01233 652149 or 07545 423299.
- **The Social Services Department for advice, (telephone numbers below)** and ask for “**A consultation with the Duty Social Worker on a child protection issue**” to talk through your concerns.

You do not need to give the child's name at this point. The Duty Social Worker will advise you whether or not your concerns do justify making a child protection referral.

The Social Worker may consider the child to be 'a child in need' rather than 'a child at risk'. In this case, a referral to Social Services should be made but only **with the parent's agreement**. *(It may be appropriate for a CAF form to be completed – following centre staff training on the subject)*

Families sometimes have a negative perception of the role of Social Services, and are reluctant to contact them, in fear that their children may be taken into care. The reality is that Social Services can offer a lot of help, both directly and through other agencies, to families who are experiencing difficulties, so your influence and support in the referral process will be very important. Social Services will assess the family, probably along with other agencies, and put in a support package if appropriate, of which the Children's Centre may well be part.

If the family concerned is reluctant for Social Services to be contacted and following a discussion with the Safeguarding Lead or Duty Manager, you could ask the parents' permission to contact another relevant agency on their behalf such as the Health Visitor. It is important to document that parental consent had been obtained.

Serious Concerns

If you are reasonably confident that the child concerned is likely to be at risk and following discussion with the Safeguarding Lead or Duty Manager, you must telephone the Social Services office immediately and ask to speak to the Duty Social Worker stating that you have serious concerns about a child in your care.

Telephone numbers:

Kent Contact and Assessment Service, open 9am - 5pm Mondays to Fridays can be reached on 0845 330 2967. (Ask for "**A consultation with the duty social worker on a child protection issue**".)

Out of Hours Social Services: **0845 7626777**

When making a referral, you will need to provide the following information, so have it to hand when you telephone:

- The name, address, date of birth, ethnic origin and gender of the child
- The names and contact telephone numbers of parents, and other carers or close family members if known
- The name, address and telephone number of the child's Doctor, and Health Visitor if applicable
- The incidents which gives rise for concern with dates and times

- The nature of the injuries observed, and/or the reason for your concerns

Following a telephone referral, you will be expected to follow this up in writing, within 24 hours by completing a multi-agency referral form. These are available from the Kent Safeguarding Child Board website - www.kscb.org.uk or within the Seashells Safeguarding Folders, in the locations described above.

Under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to make enquiries, where they have “reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm”. The Social Services Department carries this responsibility on behalf of the Local Authority. Once we have made a referral, we have fulfilled our responsibility to the child.

It is at this point that the Social Services Department will take over and a decision will be made on what happens next. All referrals are taken seriously, and the needs of the child and family will be assessed, so that appropriate enquiries are followed up and support can be put into place where relevant. Enquires will be made to other professionals and the child’s family. The Children’s Centre may be included in these enquiries, and we may be part of any on-going support for the child. Under Section 47(9) all staff at the Children’s Centre have a “duty to co-operate” with these enquiries.

What will be the outcome?

Having made a referral about a child, you will probably want to know the outcome of the investigation. You should receive some information, but for reasons of confidentiality, this will be on a ‘need to know’ basis. The Safeguarding Lead may be invited to participate in any care plan set up for the child.

How to respond to a child who discloses something to you.

If a child tells you something, it is important that you respond appropriately:

- Do listen to the child and avoid interrupting except to clarify
- Allow the child or young person to make the disclosure at their own pace and in their own way
- Do not interrogate the child. It is alright to ask for clarification, but you should not ask leading questions. Misguided or inappropriate questioning in the first instance can do more harm than good, and may contaminate evidence, which could be needed in an investigation. The interviewing of children must be undertaken by the trained Social workers or Police Officers
- Do not make any promises to the child about not passing on the information – the child needs to know that you have to talk to someone who will be able to help them
- Record the information as accurately as you can, including the timing, setting and those present, as well as what was said. Do not exaggerate or embellish what you have heard in any way

- Inform the Safeguarding Lead
- Where the disclosure is made to a member of visiting staff from another agency, this should be passed to the Safeguarding Lead, so that the Children's Centre policy and procedure can be implemented.

Record Keeping

Staff can play a vital role in helping children in need or at risk by effective monitoring and record keeping. Any incident or behavioural change in a child or young person that gives cause for concern should be recorded on 'Green Form', copies of which are kept in the Seashells Safeguarding Folders. It is important that records are kept factual and reflect the words used by the child or young person. Records must be signed and dated with timings if appropriate.

Information to be recorded:

- Child's name and date of birth
- Child in normal context
- The incident with dates and times
- A verbatim record of what the child or young person has said
- If recording bruising/injuries indicate position, colour, size, shape and time on body map.
- Action taken.

What to do if you need to take emergency action to protect a child

On very rare occasions, it may be necessary to act quickly, for example, to protect a child from a drunken or violent parent. In these circumstances, it would be appropriate to discuss this with the Safeguarding Lead immediately who should telephone the police.

In an unlikely event that a child is brought to the Children's Centre with serious injuries, it would be appropriate to discuss this with the Safeguarding Lead immediately who should telephone for an ambulance.

If there is no time then the emergency services may be contacted directly without reference to the Safeguarding Lead and what protection and or medical attention that can reasonably be provided should be given without delay. Staff must ensure that they take reasonable care for their own safety at all times.

It is important to remember that these types of scenarios are very unlikely to happen.

What support is available to you?

Any member of the team affected by issues arising from concerns for children's welfare or safety can seek support from their Safeguarding Lead.

The Safeguarding Lead can put staff and parents in touch with outside agencies for professional support if they wish so.

Monitoring and Review

All Centre personnel and visiting staff will have access to a copy of this policy and will have the opportunity to consider and discuss the contents prior to approval of the Children's Centre Steering Group being formally sought.

This policy will be reviewed regularly.

All staff should have access to this policy and sign to the effect that they have read and understood its contents.



Policy for: What happens if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of Children's Centre Staff

Unfortunately, child abuse does occasionally take place in crèche and centre provisions, so we have introduced this separate policy to remind staff of the measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of any allegations being made against them or another member of staff. It also contains the procedure, which will be undertaken if an allegation is made against a member of staff. This complies with both Ofsted and Social Services requirements.

How we can protect ourselves?

- If a child sustains an injury whilst in our care, we will record it in the accident book as soon as possible. When the child is collected, we will inform whoever picks the child up about the injury and ensure that they also sign the accident book to confirm they have been informed of the event
- If a child arrives with an injury sustained elsewhere we will ask for an explanation and again record this in the accident book and ask whoever has brought in the child to sign the record
- We will ensure that all staff undertake regular child protection training
- We will ensure that all parents understand our role and responsibility in child protection. Within the crèche this will be to parents in writing within the crèche information pack before the child begins to attend the Children's Centre crèche
- Our behavioural management policy states that no physical sanctions will be used and we will ensure that everyone complies with it in all settings within the Children's Centre and within our community work
- We will try to avoid situations where an adult is left alone in a room with a child. If this does occur, we will make sure that the door is left open and there are other people around
- We will avoid engaging in rough physical play with children, as this may be misconstrued and could cause accidental injury to a child
- We will avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- We will take up references of employees, including one from the candidate's last employer, and will always question any gaps in employment history. We will also request at least one character reference for volunteers
- We will encourage an open door ethos, to enable staff to talk to senior managers if they have concerns about the conduct of any of their colleagues

What happens if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff in the Children's centre?

- If anyone makes an allegation of abuse against a member of our staff, The Director will be informed immediately and will contact:
Leanna Baker, Children's Officer or on 01233 652149 or 07545 423299, or if unavailable an alternative member of the Children's Safeguards Unit on 01622 696366
They will assess whether the allegation reaches the threshold for referral to Police/Social Services and advise accordingly regarding further action to be taken in respect of the child and the member of staff.
- The Director will complete the attached form for recording allegations or complaints made against staff.
- The Director will not discuss the allegation with the member of staff concerned, unless advised to do so by Social Services.
- If the allegation is made against the Director, this should be made to/or reported to their line manager – currently Kieren Mansfield, Swale Borough Council 01795 417262; or in his absence the Chair.
- **All staff need to be aware that it is a disciplinary offence not to report concerns about the conduct of a colleague that could place a child at risk. When in doubt – consult.**
- If Social Services and/or the police decide to carry out an investigation, advice and consultation will be offered with regard to managing the potential risk and whether the member of staff can continue to work at the centre. The Children's Centre could also invoke their disciplinary procedure.
- We will not carry out an investigation ourselves **unless** Social Services and the Police decide it is not appropriate for them to do so. We understand that Ofsted may wish to undertake further investigations.

Always remember;

The welfare of the child is paramount.

Guidance for managers completing Checklist for handling and recording allegations or complaints of abuse made against a member of staff regarding a child/children in their care

1. Record the name and position of member of staff against whom the allegation or complaint has been made.
2. Verbal complaints should be backed up in writing by the complainant if appropriate; some may require immediate action that does not allow time for this to happen.
3. It is important to identify who made the complaint and whether it was received first hand or is a concern that is passed on from somebody else. If this is the case it is better that you receive the information first hand. If a parent, carer or a member of staff at the Children's Centre makes a complaint against you it must be passed immediately to your line manager.
4. Record the full name, age and date of birth of the child.
5. The address recorded should be the address at which the child lives with the main carer.
6. If there are one or more alleged incidents, be specific as possible about dates that they are alleged to have happened.
7. Check the attendance register/ diary of work to see if the child was present/seen on that day and the shift patterns of the staff member involved to see if they were working at that time. This will confirm the likelihood of the incident having taken place.
8. If you have received the complaint in writing attach it to the checklist. You can then summarise it on the form.
9. Any other information should be factual. It will be helpful if you can confirm things such as the level of contact that the staff member has with the child and any other minor concerns that may have been raised previously. **Do not attempt to investigate the complaint yourself.**
10. Remember that if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of our staff you must inform the Director who will contact the Children's Safeguard Unit for further advice.
11. **Ofsted must be informed** if an allegation is made against a member of our staff within the crèche, even if the Children's Safeguards Unit

decides no further action is required. Ofsted may do their own investigation to ensure that registration requirements are being met.

12. Make a note of any actions the Children's Safeguards Unit or Ofsted advise you to take and the date or times at which you implemented them.

Checklist for handling and recording allegations or complaints of abuse made against a member of staff regarding a child/children in their care

Name and position of staff who is the subject of allegations/complaint:	
Is the complaint: Written or verbal? (Delete as necessary)	
Complaint made by:	Relationship to child:
Name of child:	Age and date of birth of child:
Parent's/carers name(s) and address:	
Date of alleged incident/s:	
Did the child attend/seen on this/these date/s:	
Nature of complaint (if received in writing see guidance):	
Other relevant information (continue on a separate sheet if needed):	
Social Services contacted at (date and time):	
Ofsted informed at (date and time):	
Further actions advised by Social Services Department and Ofsted:	
Your name:	Your position:
Signature:	Date & time of completing: