



Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras Policy

Arrangements for Review:

Sharon Thomas is responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews. This policy was adopted in February 2011 and will be **reviewed in February 2012**

Introduction

Seashells and Sheerness Neighbourhood Nursery accept that mobile phones are a part of everyday life for parents, carers and for staff.

This policy is part of the centre's wider commitment to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

This policy is linked to Seashells policies on Child Protection, Photography and Use of Photographic Images and Whistleblowing.

Mobile phones

- Staff working directly with children must not use mobile phones as it is inappropriate and distracts them paying full attention to the children in their care.
- Mobile phones and conversations within groups can be very disruptive and they divert the parent/carers attention away from the responsibility of looking after their children.
- If calls must be taken parents/carers should respect other group users and staff by keeping the conversation brief or where possible return the call after the group has finished. If lengthy or urgent calls must be taken and parents are not observing their children, staff may ask the parent involved to leave.

Cameras and camera phones

- One of the key ways that practitioners support children's development and engage parents in children's learning is through photographs that record their activities and achievements. Staff will always check with parents that they consent to the use of cameras for appropriate recording purposes in this way.
- We encourage parents/carers to record their children's progress during groups and activities; however this must be appropriate to the activity they are taking part in. Parents/carers should therefore speak with staff running the group before taking any photographs at any Children's Centre activity.
- The use of any sort of camera by parents/carers is prohibited in the Nursery.

The most recent communications from the Kent CFE Children's Safeguards Service and from the DCSF on this matter are attached.

Mobile phone usage in Children's Centres
February 2010

There is currently no statutory guidance surrounding the use of mobile phones within children's centres and so policies relating to mobile phone use are at the discretion of the Centre Manager.

It is anticipated that a policy is likely to be developed by central government in the coming months, but in the meantime, the guidance below has been developed and approved by CFE Children's Safeguards Service for circulation to all Children's Centres.

The most recent communication from the DCSF on this matter is attached at Appendix 1.

Claire Ray, Area Children's Officer (Early Years):

"Further to my article in the Early Years Focus Spring 2010 edition, I'd like to clarify a few things on the use of mobile phones in Children's Centres and Early Years Settings.

We are all understandably shocked at the conviction of Vanessa George, a nursery worker at Little Teds in Plymouth. She was convicted of sexually abusing children in her care and taking photos of the abuse, via a mobile phone. It is fair to say that the use of a mobile phone which had a camera facility made it easier for Vanessa George to take these photographs of the children she abused. However, this is not the *reason* she took the photographs and abused the children in her care.

Had there been a ban on mobile phones in Little Teds nursery, which there may well have been, this would not have prevented Vanessa George committing the offences she did. Indeed, she was the supervisor in the setting so would have been responsible for implementing the ban.

Following such cases, it can be tempting to act in a way which is disproportionate, for example by trying to enforce a blanket ban on the use of mobile phones across the Setting or Centre. Whilst this may appease parents of children who attend the setting, this alone will not keep children safe. Additionally, it would be very difficult to implement and may create a false sense of security.

Children are kept safe in Centres and Settings by there being a 'Safe Culture'. This culture allows children to talk about feeling safe, or indeed unsafe, staff members to raise concerns about their own practice or that of their colleagues and parents or carers to talk openly about issues concerning their children. It requires all staff to have an understanding of wider safeguarding issues which means they are going to be alert to any potential risks to children in their care from family members and staff alike.

The DCSF guidance on the use of mobile phones and technology recommends a measured response which is something we would endorse.

Staff working directly with children should not be using mobile phones as this distracts them paying full attention to the children in their care, rather than because they may take indecent images. Parents using Children's Centres should not be talking constantly on their phones whilst attending a group as this will be a distraction to other parents and they will not be able to participate fully, rather than because they may take indecent images.

The vast majority of people either working with children, or using Children's Centres have no ill intent towards children. Therefore, I would urge managers to think carefully about implementing a total mobile phone and camera ban and ensure that if they decide to proceed with a total ban, this is for valid reasons rather than as a knee jerk reaction to a shocking case.

As always, if you require any further information on any of the issues raised, please contact your Area Children's Officer (Early Years)."

Claire Ray
Area Children's Officer (Early Years)

Kel Arthur
Head of Children's Safeguards Service

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MESSAGE TO EARLY YEARS LEADS – GOOD PRACTICE IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS AND CHILDREN’S CENTRES

I am writing to you in light of a number of queries about the use of mobile phones and cameras in childcare settings that the Department has received recently. These concerns were in relation to the risk of staff becoming distracted from their work with children when using their mobile phones and the inappropriate use of mobile phone cameras. This note highlights our advice on good practice in this area and that we expect Early Years settings and Children’s Centres to apply common sense.

We need to ensure that childcare providers continue to feel supported to use and make the most of the benefits of modern technology to support children’s learning and development, whilst ensuring that children are kept safe. The Department’s expectation is that, in general, mobile phones should not be used when staff are working with children, and that in developing their safeguarding policies and procedures, managers should set out clearly how mobile phones and other potential distractions should be handled in their settings.

On cameras, we know that one of the key ways that practitioners support children’s development and engage parents in children’s learning is through photographs that record their activities and achievements. We would expect managers to continue using cameras in this way and would encourage them to check with parents that they consent to the use of cameras for appropriate recording purposes.

I would be grateful if you could work with providers in your local area to draw this aspect of safeguarding to their attention.

Claudine Menashe-Jones

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