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**Safeguarding Children – Child Protection**

At The Learning zone Nursery we work with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children, we create a high-quality, welcoming and safe environment and our aim is to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form. We support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children’s health and development. Here at The Learning Zone we strive to protect children from the risk of radicalisation and we promote acceptance and tolerance of other beliefs and cultures. Safeguarding is a much wider subject than the elements covered within this single policy, therefore this document should be used in conjunction with the nursery’s other policies and procedures.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, in relation to this policy is defined as:

• Protecting children from maltreatment

• Preventing the impairment of children’s health or development

• Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

• Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. (Definition taken from the HM Government document ‘Working together to safeguard children).

*As a setting if we have any concerns about a child’s safety or welfare we will immediately notify our local authority children’s social care team, inline with local reporting procedures, and in an emergency, the police. OFSTED will then be informed within the appropriate time.*

Policy intention to safeguard children and promote their welfare we will:

• Create an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image

• Provide positive role models and develop a safe culture where staff are confident to raise concerns about professional conduct

• Support staff to notice the softer signs of abuse and know what action to take

• Encourage children to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development

• Provide a safe and secure environment for all children

• Promote tolerance and acceptance of different beliefs, cultures and communities

• Help children to understand how they can influence and participate in decision making and how to promote British values through play, discussion and role modelling

• Always listen to children

• Provide an environment where practitioners are confident to identify where children and families may need intervention and seek the help they need

• Share information with other agencies as appropriate.

The nursery is aware that abuse does occur in our society, and we are vigilant in identifying signs of abuse and reporting concerns. Our practitioners have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of children. Due to the many hours of care we are providing, staff may often be the first people to identify that there may be a problem. They may well be the first people in whom children confide information that may suggest abuse or to spot changes in a child’s behaviour which may indicate abuse. Our prime responsibility is the welfare and well-being of each child in our care. As such we believe we have a duty to the children, parents and staff to act quickly and responsibly in any instance that may come to our attention. This includes sharing information and working alongside any relevant agencies such as local authority services for children’s social care, health professionals, all local safeguarding partners, and/or the police. All staff will work with other agencies in the best interest of the child, including as part of a multi-agency team, where needed.

The nursery aims to:

* Safeguard children
* Ensure that adults who have contact with children are suitable.
* Promote good health.
* Support and understand behaviour.
* Maintain records, policies and procedures.
* Keep the child at the centre of all we do
* Ensure staff are trained right from induction to understand the child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures, are alert to identify possible signs of abuse (including the signs known as softer signs of abuse), understand what is meant by child protection and are aware of the different ways in which children can be harmed, including by other children through bullying or discriminatory behaviour
* Be aware of the increased vulnerability of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and other vulnerable or isolated families and children
* Ensure staff understand how to recognise early indicators of potential radicalisation and terrorism threats and act on them appropriately in line with national and local procedures
* Ensure that all staff feel confident and supported to act in the best interest of the child, share information and seek the help that the child may need
* Ensure that all staff are familiar and updated regularly with child protection training and procedures and kept informed of changes to local/national procedures, including thorough annual safeguarding newsletters and updates and in line with our Hertfordshire Safeguarding children partnership.
* Make any child protection referrals in a timely way, sharing relevant information as necessary in line with procedures set out by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.
* Make any referrals relating to extremism to the police (or the Government helpline) in a timely way, sharing relevant information as appropriate
* Ensure that information is shared only with those people who need to know in order to protect the child and act in their best interest
* Keep the setting safe online using appropriate filters, checks and safeguards, monitoring access at all times
* Ensure that children are never placed at risk while in the charge of nursery staff
* Identify changes in staff behaviour and act on these as per the Staff Behaviour Policy
* Take any appropriate action relating to allegations of serious harm or abuse against any person working with children or living or working on the nursery premises including reporting such allegations to Ofsted and other relevant authorities
* Ensure parents are fully aware of child protection policies and procedures when they register with the nursery and are kept informed of all updates when they occur
* Regularly review and update this policy with staff and parents where appropriate and make sure it complies with any legal requirements and any 4 guidance or procedures issued by the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

We will support children by offering reassurance, comfort and sensitive interactions. We will devise activities according to individual circumstances to enable children to develop confidence and self-esteem within their peer group and support them to learn how to keep themselves safe.

Types of Abuse:

**P**hysical

**E**motional

**N**eglect

**S**exual

**Continuum of Need**

The continuum of need is a guide that sets out the ‘levels of need’ experienced by children, young people and families in Hertfordshire, it offers clarity and support to partners working with them and at what level they should be leading on early support.

The Children Act 2004 places a responsibility on professionals to assess children in need earlier and intervene with support to help stop children's needs escalating. The [**Hertfordshire Continuum of Need Document**](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/childrens-services/hscb/professionals/continuum-of-needs-hscb-november-2020.pdf) provides guidance on the levels of need and service response and about how the thresholds affect the type of referrals accepted by Children's Safeguarding & Specialist Services, which is positioned at level 3/4 and statutory duties.

**Suspicious injuries:**

If a staff member notices a suspicious injury on a child they are required to fill out a pre-existing injury form. They must clearly detail the time, date, and all information they have relating to the injury. The parent/carer will then be asked to fill out their section and sign the form. This will then be kept on record in the child’s individual file and will be monitored/reviewed closely.

**Responding to suspicions of Significant harm**

We acknowledge that significant harm of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.

When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional harm, 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 indications of possible abuse or neglect; and any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
* We take into account factors affecting parental capacity, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, parent’s drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness or parent’s learning disability.
* We are aware of other factors that affect children’s vulnerability such as, abuse of disabled children; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, such as through internet abuse; and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision.
* 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.
* 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 concerns.
* Where such evidence is apparent, a practitioner 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 ‘DSL’. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
* We refer concerns to the local authority children’s social care department and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. NB In some cases this may mean the police, or another agency identified by the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership.
* We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
* We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-19 as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be taken into account, but 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.

**“Soft” indicators of abuse/harm**

Early years professional are being advised to look for “soft” indications of abuse/harm, following draft guidelines released by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

The warning indications include low self-esteem, wetting and soiling, recurrent nightmares, aggressive behavior, habitual body rocking, indiscriminate affection-seeking, over-friendliness towards strangers, excessive clinginess and persistent attention-seeking.

**Pre-mobile/immobile babies under 6 months**

Within our nursery we often have siblings or other young family members/friends accompany our children to nursery when being dropped off, if at any point a member of staff notices any type of injuries (such as bruising, cuts etc..) then an instant referral must be made by the staff member to the following team;

Children Service Referral on 0300 1234043 (This is regardless of any explanation given by the parent/carer)

* If parent/carer are present, advise them of your concerns and give the bruising leaflet for them to read.
* If parent/carer not present (i.e.. older children) do not contact parents but refer to Children Services and ascertain the action plan first.

**Physical abuse**

Action needs to be taken if staff have reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g. fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles and face.

Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries. These should also be logged and discussed with the nursery manager.

Children and babies may be abused physically through shaking or throwing. Other injuries may include burns or scalds. These are not usual childhood injuries and should always be logged and discussed with the nursery manager.

**Female genital mutilation**

This type of physical abuse is practised as a cultural ritual by certain ethnic groups and there is now more awareness of its prevalence in some communities in England including its effect on the child and any other siblings involved. This procedure may be carried out shortly after birth and during childhood as well as adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman’s first pregnancy and varies widely according to the community. Symptoms may include bleeding, painful areas, acute urinary retention, urinary infection, wound infection, septicaemia, incontinence, vaginal and pelvic infections with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as physiological concerns. If you have concerns about a child relating to this area, you should contact children’s social care team in the same way as other types of physical abuse. There is a mandatory duty to report to police any case where an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18, we will ensure this is followed in our setting.

**Breast Ironing**

Breast ironing also known as "breast flattening" is the process where young girls' breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage. Although this is unlikely to happen to children in the nursery due to their age, we will ensure any signs of this in young adults or older children are followed up using the usual safeguarding referral process.

**Witchcraft**

Abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession.

Generally, the signs will not differ from other types of abuse and could include:

* physical injuries such as marks, bruises or burns
* the child being, withdrawn, distressed, disorientated or isolated
* loss of weight, hunger/malnourishment
* poor hygiene, unkempt, dirty clothes
* irregular attendance at school

Specific indicators that the abuse may be linked to spirit possession/witchcraft may be present when professionals interact with the family.

Signs to look out for include (this is not an exhaustive list):

* does the family come from a community or religion where such beliefs are widely accepted?
* has there been a change in the family dynamic or structure. Are the family under pressure?
* does the parent/carer put a high value on preserving family honour?
* are there comments being made about the child being ‘different’?

We will ensure any signs of this in children, young adults or older children are followed up using our safeguarding referral process.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

Working Together to Safeguard Children defines CSE as “…a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.” We will be aware of the possibility of CSE and the signs and symptoms this may manifest as. If we have concerns we will follow the same procedures as for other concerns and we will record and refer as appropriate.

**Adult sexual exploitation**

As part of our safeguarding procedures we will also ensure that staff and students are safeguarded from sexual exploitation.

**Emotional abuse**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there is a severe, adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child, caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

This may include extremes of discipline where a child is shouted at or put down on a consistent basis, lack of emotional attachment by a parent, or it may include parents or carers placing inappropriate age or developmental expectations upon them. Emotional abuse may also be imposed through the child witnessing domestic abuse and alcohol and drug misuse by adults caring for them.

The child is likely to show extremes of emotion with this type of abuse. This may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive or clingy in order to receive their love and attention. This type of abuse is harder to identify as the child is not likely to show any physical signs.

**Neglect**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there has been any type of neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation or failure to seek medical treatment, when required, on behalf of the child), which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including failure to thrive.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at nursery unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child’s growth or hurt them), arriving at nursery in the same nappy they went home in or a child having an illness or identified special educational need or disability that is not being addressed by the parent. A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child’s needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g. a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at nursery. They may be clingy and emotional. In addition, neglect may occur through pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

**Under the influence of drugs and/or Alcohol**

If at any time we feel that a parent/ carer, or anyone authorised to collect a child is under the influence of alcohol and/or any other toxic substance, we as a nursery will have the child’s safety in mind and therefore may refuse to release a child into your care. In the event that parents/carers appear to smell of alcohol but appear coherent and are giving a reasonable explanation, the child would be released but staff will make a record of it. If a parent/carer appears to be under serious influence of alcohol with symptoms such as smelling of alcohol, slurred speech and “out of character” behaviour then we would refuse the release of a child and we would then contact another authorized person (from the child’s emergency contacts list) to come and collect the child, explaining the circumstances and that the incident will be recorded by a member of staff. In some cases, an incident of this nature could lead to a referral to the Children’s Social Care Team.

**Reporting Procedures**

All staff have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns and suspicions of abuse. These concerns will be discussed with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) Annette Gasson, Janet Merrell or Charlotte Hughes as soon as possible.

• Staff will report their concerns to the DSL

• Any signs of marks/injuries to a child or information a child has given will be recorded and stored securely

• If appropriate, the incident will be discussed with the parent/carer, such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to these records on request

• If there are queries/concerns regarding the injury/information given, then the following procedures will take place:

The DSL lead will:

• Speak to the parents/carers (unless child is in immediate danger of further harm)

• Record the information and action taken relating to the concern raised

* Consult the continuum of need tool and determine which level of service/need is required and follow the appropriate channel.
* Make a referral to children’s social care <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/report-child-protection-concern.aspx#:~:text=If%20you're%20a%20child,time%20on%200300%20123%204043>.

0300 123 4043

• Inform Ofsted (If appropriate)

• The DSL will follow up action taken by the Local Children’s social care team. If they have not contacted the setting within the timeframe set out in Working Together to Safeguarding Children.

Keeping children safe is our highest priority and if, for whatever reason, staff do not feel able to report concerns to the DCSO or deputy DCSO they should call the Local Children’s Safeguarding Partnership or the NSPCC and report their concerns anonymously.

These contact numbers are displayed on your staff notice Partnership and is the following number Local Safeguarding Children Partnership 0300 1234043

**Recording Suspicions of Abuse and Disclosures**

Staff should make an objective record of any observation or disclosure, supported by the nursery manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). This record should include:

• Child's name

• Child's address

• Age of the child and date of birth

• Date and time of the observation or the disclosure

• Exact words spoken by the child

• Exact position and type of any injuries or marks seen

• Exact observation of any incident including any concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time

• Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate).

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and the \*manager/\*DSL, dated and kept in a separate confidential file. If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse it is important not to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly, and disclosure is not forced, or words put into the child’s mouth. As soon as possible after the disclosure details must be logged accurately.

It may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with the local authority Local Safeguarding Children Partnership 0300 1234043 and be referred to children’s social care team and Ofsted. Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information/concerns they have with regard to a child. The nursery expects all members of staff to co-operate with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership 0300 1234043 and the local authority children’s social care, police, and Ofsted in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about the supposed or actual behaviour of a parent or member of staff.

**Informing parents/carers**

Parents are normally the first point of contact. If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the HSCB/ local authority children’s social care team/police does not allow this. This will usually be the case where the parent or family member is the likely abuser or where a child may be endangered by this disclosure. In these cases, the investigating officers will inform parents.

**Confidentiality**

suspicions, enquiries and external investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared in line with guidance from the Hertfordshire Safeguarding children’s Partnership.

**Support to families**

The Learning Zone Nursery takes every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relations among families, staff, students and volunteers within the nursery.

The nursery continues to welcome the child and the family whilst enquiries are being made in relation to abuse in the home situation. Parents and families will be treated with respect in a non-judgmental manner whilst any external investigations are carried out in the best interest of the child.

Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child, only if appropriate in line with guidance of the HSCP with the provision that the care and safety of the child is paramount. We will do all in our power to support and work with the child's family.

**Allegations against adults working or volunteering with children**

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, student or volunteer or any other person who works on the nursery premises regardless of whether the allegation relates to the nursery premises or elsewhere, we will follow the procedure below.

The allegation should be reported to the managers (Annette Gasson & Janet Merrell). If this person is the subject of the allegation, then this should be reported to the Designated safeguarding lead.

The LADO Threshold document will be consulted, action will be taken, and a referral made if appropriate.

<https://thegrid.org.uk/account/login?redirect_uri=/safeguarding-and-child-protection/child-protection/allegations-against-staff/local-authority-designated-officer-lado-referral-form>

(HSCB) Hertfordshire safeguarding children Partnership for consultation and/or referral, children’s services, and Ofsted will then be informed immediately in order for this to be investigated by the appropriate bodies promptly:

• They will be informed immediately for advice and guidance

• If as an individual, you feel this will not be taken seriously or are worried about the allegation getting back to the person in question then it is your duty to inform the (HSCP) yourself directly

• A full investigation will be carried out by the appropriate professionals ((HSCP) LADO, Ofsted,) to determine how this will be handled

• The nursery will follow all instructions from the HSCP, LADO, Ofsted, and ask all staff members to do the same and co-operate where required

• Support will be provided to all those involved in an allegation throughout the external investigation in line with LADO support and advice

• The nursery reserves the right to suspend any member of staff during an investigation

• All enquiries/external investigations/interviews will be documented and kept in a locked file for access by the relevant authorities

• Unfounded allegations will result in all rights being reinstated

• Founded allegations will be passed on to the relevant organisations including the local authority children’s social care team and where an offence is believed to have been committed, the police, and will result in the termination of employment. Ofsted will be notified immediately of this decision. The nursery will also notify the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to ensure their records are updated

• All records will be kept until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 21 years and 3 months years if that is longer. This will ensure accurate information is available for references and future DBS checks and avoids any unnecessary reinvestigation

• The nursery retains the right to dismiss any member of staff in connection with founded allegations following an inquiry

• Continued support/staff wellbeing will be available for any member of the nursery who is affected by an allegation, their colleagues in the nursery and the parents.

**Monitoring children’s attendance (please also see our Attendance Policy)**

As part of our requirements under the statutory framework and guidance documents we are required to monitor children’s attendance patterns to ensure they are consistent and no cause for concern. Parents should please inform the nursery prior to their children taking holidays or days off, and all sickness should be called/texted or emailed into the nursery on the day, so the nursery management are able to account for a child’s absence. This should not stop parents taking precious time with their children but enables children’s attendance to be logged so we know the child is safe.

\*All child absences will be followed up in a timely manner

\*We will follow up on absences and take appropriate steps including, phone calls to emergency contacts, visits to house, phone call to police non-emergency number (if required).

**Looked after children**

As part of our safeguarding practice, we will ensure our staff are aware of how to keep looked after children safe. In order to do this, we ask that we are informed of:

• The legal status of the child (e.g. whether the child is being looked after under voluntary arrangements with consent of parents or on an interim or full care order)

• Contact arrangements for the biological parents (or those with parental responsibility)

• The child’s care arrangements and the levels of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after him/her

• The details of the child’s social worker and any other support agencies involved

• Any child protection plan or care plan in place for the child in question.

**Human Trafficking & Slavery**

Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Children are trafficked for:

* [child sexual exploitation](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/)
* criminal activity, including:
* illegal substance cultivation/distribution etc..
* street crime - such as theft
* benefit fraud
* immigration fraud
* forced marriage
* domestic servitude, including:
* cleaning
* childcare
* illegal adoption
* unreported private fostering arrangements (for any exploitative purpose).

This list is not exhaustive and children who are trafficked are often exploited in more than one way.

*Effects on children*

Being trafficked is abuse in itself. But trafficked children may experience other forms of abuse and neglect that impact on their physical and mental health and social and emotional development.

These include:

* [sexual abuse](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-abuse/) and [exploitation](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/)
* [physical abuse](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/physical-abuse/)
* [emotional abuse](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/emotional-abuse/)
* [neglect](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/neglect/).

Impacts of child trafficking and exploitation include:

* poor health and illness, which may be left untreated
* limited or no access to education
* physical and mental exhaustion.

Children may also experience emotional challenges, such as missing family, friends, communities and cultures. This can lead to:

* feeling isolated and lonely
* disturbed sleep patterns
* depression and/or anxiety
* headaches
* panic attacks
* eating difficulties
* self-harm and suicidal thoughts
* drug and alcohol use as a means to escape from problems
* post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Children who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked may:

* have to do excessive housework chores
* rarely leave the house and have limited freedom of movement
* not have any documents (or have falsified documents)
* give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children
* be unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
* not be registered with a school or a GP practice
* have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
* be cared for by adults who are not their parents or carers
* not have a good quality relationship with their adult carers
* be one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
* receive unexplained or unidentified phone calls whilst in a care placement or temporary accommodation
* (Department for Education and Home Office).

Signs an adult may be trafficking a child include:

* making multiple visa applications for different children
* acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
* having previously acted as the guarantor on visa applications for visitors who have not left the UK when the visa expired

*Report child trafficking*

Children who are trafficked are intentionally hidden and isolated from the services and communities who can identify and protect them.

The steps that we will follow are;

* Discuss concerns with the DSL
* Contact the police on 999.
* Contact our local child protection services.
* Contact the Modern Slavery Helpline to get help, report a suspicion or seek advice. Call 0800 012 1700 or fill in their [online form](https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report).

**Staffing and volunteering**

Our policy is to provide a secure and safe environment for all children. We only allow an adult who is employed by the nursery to care for children and who has an enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to be left alone with children. We will obtain enhanced criminal records checks (DBS) for all (aged 16 and over) volunteers and do not allow any volunteers to be unsupervised with children.

All staff will attend child protection training and receive initial basic child protection training during their induction period. This will include the procedures for spotting signs and behaviours of abuse and abusers/potential abusers, recording and reporting concerns and creating a safe and secure environment for the children in the nursery. During induction staff will be given contact details for the LADO (local authority DSL officer), the local authority children’s services team, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCB) and Ofsted to enable them to report any safeguarding concerns, independently, if they feel it necessary to do so.

We have named persons within the nursery who take lead responsibility for safeguarding and co-ordinate child protection and welfare issues, known as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), there is always at least one DSL on duty during all opening hours of the setting. These DSL will receive comprehensive training at least every two years and update their knowledge on an ongoing basis, but at least once a year.

The nursery DSCO’s liaise with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCB) and the local authority children’s social care team, undertakes specific training, including a child protection training course, and receives regular updates to developments within this field. They in turn support the ongoing development and knowledge update of all staff on the team.

Although, under the EYFS, we are only required to have one DSL for safeguarding, for best practice and to ensure cover at all times, we have two/three DSL’s in place. This enables safeguarding to stay high on our priorities at all times. There will always be at least one DSL on duty at all times our provision is open. This will ensure that prompt action can be taken if concerns are raised.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at the nursery are: Annette Gasson, Janet Merrell and Charlotte Hughes

• We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of all children

• Applicants for posts within the nursery are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. Candidates are informed of the need to carry out checks before posts can be confirmed. Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information

• We give staff members, volunteers and students regular opportunities to declare changes that may affect their suitability to care for the children. This includes information about their health, medication or about changes in their home life such as whether anyone they live with in a household has committed an offence or been involved in an incident that means they are disqualified from working with children (Staff are asked to sign a declaration every term to disclose any updated information to ensure they are suitable to work with children). Anyone that is disqualified will not be employed to work at an early years provision.

• This information updated every term by staff members reading and signing a safeguarding staff declaration form, this is also stated within every member of staff’s handbook.

• We use the DBS update service (with staff consent) to re-check staff’s criminal history and suitability to work with children

• We abide by the requirements of the EYFS and any Ofsted guidance in respect to obtaining references and suitability checks for staff, students and volunteers, to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers working in the setting are suitable to do so

• We ensure we receive at least three written references.

• All students will have enhanced DBS checks conducted on them before their placement starts

• Volunteers, including students, do not work unsupervised

• We will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service if a member of staff is dismissed (or would have been, had they not left the setting first) because they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm.

• We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the nursery and take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the nursery so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children

• All visitors/contractors will be supervised whilst on the premises, especially when in the areas the children use

• As a staff team we will be fully aware of how to safeguard the whole nursery environment and be aware of potential dangers on the nursery boundaries such as drones, strangers lingering and the public/community using the community centre. We will ensure the children remain safe at all times

• The Staff Behaviour Policy sits alongside this policy to enable us to monitor changes in behaviours that may cause concern. All staff sign up to this policy too to ensure any changes are reported to management, so we are able to support the individual staff member and ensure the safety and care of the children is not compromised

• All staff have access to and comply with the whistleblowing policy which will enable them to share any concerns that may arise about their colleagues in an appropriate manner

• Signs of inappropriate staff behaviour may include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities; or inappropriate sharing of images. This is not an exhaustive list, any changes in behaviour must be reported and acted upon immediately

• All staff will receive regular supervision meetings where opportunities will be made available to discuss any issues relating to individual children, child protection training and any needs for further support

• We use peer on peer and manager observations in the setting to ensure that the care we provide for children is at the highest level and any areas for staff development are quickly highlighted. Peer observations allow us to share constructive feedback, develop practice and build trust so that staff are able to share any concerns they may have. Any concerns are raised with the DSL and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner

• The deployment of staff within the nursery allows for constant supervision and support. Where children need to spend time away from the rest of the group, the door will be left ajar or other safeguards will be put into action to ensure the safety of the child and the adult.

**The criteria for effective safeguarding training**

1. Training is designed for staff caring for 0 – 5 year olds and is appropriate to the age of the children being cared for.
2. . The safeguarding training for all [practitioners/childminders and assistants] must cover the following areas:

• What is meant by the term safeguarding.

• The main categories of abuse, harm and neglect.

• The factors, situation and actions that could lead or contribute to abuse, harm or neglect.

• How to work in ways that safeguard children from abuse, harm and neglect.

• How to identify signs of possible abuse, harm and neglect at the earliest opportunity. These may include:

• Significant changes in children's behaviour.

• A decline in children’s general well-being.

• Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect.

• Concerning comments or behaviour from children.

• Inappropriate behaviour from practitioners, parents/carers, volunteers, students or any other person working with the children. This could include inappropriate sexual comments; excessive one-to-one attention beyond what is required through their role; or inappropriate sharing of images.

• Any reasons to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting, for example in the child’s home or that a child may experience emotional abuse or physical abuse because of witnessing domestic abuse or coercive control or that a girl may have been subjected to (or is at risk of) female genital mutilation.

• How to respond, record and effectively refer concerns or allegations related to safeguarding in a timely and appropriate way.

• The setting’s safeguarding policy and procedures.

• Legislation, national policies, codes of conduct and professional practice in relation to safeguarding.

• Roles and responsibilities of [practitioners/childminders and assistants] and other relevant professionals involved in safeguarding.

1. Training for the DSL should take account of any advice from the local safeguarding partners or local authority on appropriate training courses. Training for the DSL must cover the elements listed below:

• How to build a safer organisational culture.

• How to ensure safer recruitment.

• How to develop and implement safeguarding policies and procedures.

• If applicable, how to support and work with [other practitioners/assistants] to safeguard children.

• Local child protection procedures and how to liaise with local statutory children's services agencies and with the local safeguarding partners to safeguard children.

• How to refer and escalate concerns (including as described at paragraph [3.8/3.9] of the EYFS).

• How to manage and monitor allegations of abuse against other staff.

• How to ensure internet safety.

**Staff members babysitting children outside of The Learning Zone setting**

Parents/carer must be aware that babysitting is not part of our provision’s responsibilities and is a private arrangement between the staff member and the parent/guardian. The provision will not be held responsible for any health and safety, or other, issues that may arise from private arrangements.

Out-of-hours babysitting arrangements must not interfere with staff members’ working hours and their nursery employment must take priority at all times. Confidentiality of employment must be adhered to and respected at all times.

**Employees, students or volunteers of the nursery or working on the nursery premises**

We have a Staff Behaviour Policy in place that supports us to monitor staff and changes in their character. Staff are aware of the need to disclose changes to circumstance and use the whistle blowing policy where required.

**Extremism – the Prevent Duty**

Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 we have a duty to refer any concerns of extremism to the police (In Prevent priority areas the local authority will have a Prevent lead who can also provide support).

This may be a cause for concern relating to a change in behaviour of a child or family member, comments causing concern made to a member of the team (or other persons in the setting) or actions that lead staff to be worried about the safety of a child in their care.

Alongside this we will be alert to any early signs in children and families who may be at risk of radicalisation, on which we will act and document all concerns when reporting further.

**E-Safety**

Our nursery is aware of the growth of internet use and the advantages this can bring. However, it is also aware of the dangers and strives to support children, staff and families in using the internet safely. Within the nursery we do this by:

• Ensuring we have appropriate antivirus and anti-spyware software on all devices and updating them regularly

• Ensuring content blockers and filters are on our computers, laptops and any mobile devices

• Ensure management monitor all internet activities in the setting

• Using approved devices to record/photograph in the setting

• Never emailing personal or financial information

• Reporting emails with inappropriate content to the internet watch foundation (IWF [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk))

• Ensuring children are supervised when using internet devices

• Integrating e-safety into nursery daily practice by discussing computer usage ‘rules’ deciding together what is safe and what is not safe to do online

• Talking to children about ‘stranger danger’ and deciding who is a stranger and who is not, comparing people in real life situations to online ‘friends’

• When using FaceTime (where applicable) discussing with the children what they would do if someone they did not know tried to contact them

• We abide by an acceptable use policy, ensuring staff only use the work IT equipment for matters relating to the children and their education and care. No personal use will be tolerated

Parents are expected to use social media for nursery communication in a way that is professional, respectful, and focused on the nursery's well-being and the children's safety. This includes respecting confidentiality, obtaining consent before sharing images or videos, and avoiding negativity or inappropriate discussions about the Nursery and/or specific parents/carers/children.

Our nursery has a clear commitment to protecting children and promoting welfare. Should anyone believe that this policy is not being upheld, it is their duty to report the matter to the attention of the \*nursery manager/\*owner/DSCO/\*registered person at the earliest opportunity/Designated E-Safety Officer.

All Staff/parents/carers/families are expected to adhere to The Learning Zone policies.

**Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are:**

Annette Gasson

Janet Merrell

Charlotte Hughes

**Contact telephone numbers**

Local safeguarding Children Partnership 0300 1234043

Local authority Designated Officer (LADO) 0300 123 4043

Ofsted 0300 123 1231

Non-emergency police 101

Anti-terrorist hotline: Call 0800 789 321, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Prevent team email prevent@herts.pnn.police.uk

**HSCP:** https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/hscp.aspx

**Report a concern:** <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/report-child-protection-concern.aspx>

**Child protection referral:** <https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/my-account>



**Operation Encompass**

It is a charitable organisation that The Learning Zone have signed up to, it was created in 2010, which has since enabled effective interventions to many thousands of children who've experienced domestic abuse.

Operation Encompass is the notification to Nurseries, prior to the start of the next school day, of incidents where a child or young person has experienced or been exposed to any domestic abuse.

Operation Encompass will ensure that a member of the Nursery staff, (DSL) known as a Key Adult, is trained to allow them to liaise with the police and to use the information that has been shared in confidence. They will also ensure that the nursery is able to make provision for possible difficulties experienced by children, or their families, who have experienced a domestic abuse incident.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all the children and we believe this will be extremely beneficial for all those involved.

For further information, please take a look at their website using this link: [About us : Operation Encompass](https://www.operationencompass.org/about-us)

*All staff have completed the online training. The training updates staff members' knowledge of domestic abuse, children as victims of domestic abuse, how Operation Encompass works in principle and how staff can support children experiencing domestic abuse.*

**Legal framework**

• Children Act 1989 and 2004

• Childcare Act 2006

• Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

• Children and Social Work Act 2017

• The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

• Keeping children safe in education

• Data Protection Act 2018

• What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused

\*Working Together to Safeguard Children

 Information Sharing - Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, \*parents and carers

 \*Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations

• Counter-Terrorism and Security Act.

[About us : Operation Encompass](https://www.operationencompass.org/about-us)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disqualification-under-the-childcare-act-2006>

<https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/continuum-of-needs-for-children-and-young-people.pdf>

To be reviewed: 10/10/2025