

CARRYDUFF PLAY CARE CENTRE CHILD PROTECTION (SAFEGUARDING)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the highest standard of care and best practice towards children and vulnerable adults, while also ensuring that staff and volunteers are assured of their own protection against false allegations.

There is an expectation that all staff, volunteers and management committee members know and understand these policies and procedures, and agree to and adopt the recommended standards of good practice contained within.

Policy Statement of Intent

We at Carryduff Play Care Centre have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children in which their welfare is of paramount importance. This also means we need to inform and consult parents and carers about any decision affecting their child.

Principles

The Children (NI) Order 1995 came into force in Northern Ireland in November 1996. It significantly affects the moral and legal responsibilities of all those, both in the statutory and voluntary sectors, who work with children and young people up to the age of 18 years.

The Order embodies five key principles:

- Paramourcy – in childcare, law and practice, the welfare of the child is the principal consideration in any decision about him or her.
- Parental responsibility – parents have responsibilities to their children, rather than rights over them. In some situations, ‘significant adults’ share this responsibility with one or both parents.
- Prevention – this principle is concerned with the prevention of significant harm to children.
- Partnership – the basis of this principle is that the most effective way of ensuring that a child’s needs are met is by working in partnership, especially with parents.
- Protection – children should be safe, and should be protected by intervention if they are in danger.

Aims of the Policy

We aim to ensure that our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised, and that they are familiar with our policy on safeguarding and child protection.

All staff should be aware of social, cultural, religious, ethnic, race, colour and nationality differences and take any necessary requirements into consideration.

We endeavour to promote an open and child-centred environment in which everyone feels comfortable and free to share information and concerns.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:

Recruitment / selection

- Ensuring all staff and volunteers are fit to work with children in accordance with the Children (NI) Order 1995. This includes ensuring that all staff and volunteers are cleared through Access NI and Social Services who will ensure references have been obtained and will complete a pre-employment, police and criminal background check. This is reviewed on a regular basis.

Training and supervision

- All staff will complete Child Protection Training; selected staff will complete Designated Child Protection Officer Training. Two Designated Officers are appointed to implement our Child Protection Policy.
- Effective management is provided for all staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training. An annual appraisal is carried out to help identify training needs and also provides a means of enhancing support and supervision.
- All staff must sign that they have read and understood all policies and procedures.
- All staff, volunteers and students must complete an appropriate induction prior to commencement of their post.

Health and Safety

- By ensuring all playrooms are staffed by the recommended child / staff ratio set down by social services.
- In order to ensure that the safety of children is paramount, we at Carryduff Play Care Centre strive to provide a safe environment for children.

Code of Practice / Behaviour

- We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.
- We are committed to delivering a service that promotes good practice and protects children from harm.
- By ensuring all incidents of suspicion, poor practice and allegations of inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously and responded to swiftly, according to our guidelines.
- We strive to promote an atmosphere in which children are protected from harm and can grow and develop to their full potential.
- Children are encouraged to respect themselves and others. We have a clear anti-bullying policy and we do not tolerate prejudice; all children are encouraged to respect differences, eg disabilities, racism.

Confidentiality

- By sharing information about child protection and good practice with parents, staff and volunteers, and other relevant professionals.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Ensuring that accurate records are kept of any significant changes in a child's behaviour, physical condition or appearance.

Sharing information / Reporting

- It is our duty and responsibility to report any child protection concerns / disclosures or allegations immediately.
- If any of our staff members or volunteers feel concerned about a child, it is essential that they know how to report their concern.
- All information will only be shared on a need to know basis.
- We have appointed three members of staff as Child Protection Designated Officers. They have been trained in child protection and they are committed to the principle of confidentiality.

Responding appropriately to suspicions of abuse

We will do this by:

- Using appropriate strategies to support children who may make a disclosure of abuse.
- By observing children on an ongoing basis and noting any significant changes in behaviour that may give cause for concern.
- By keeping detailed and accurate records in accordance with confidentiality guidelines and the Data Protection Act.
- By keeping records until the child's 21st birthday, due to possibility of legal action.
- When recording incidents of abuse or suspected abuse, remember at all times to keep records **factual** and **informative**.

Below are a few guidelines to help when recording –

Do not panic

Do not ask leading questions

Do not promise to keep secrets

Do not enquire into details of the abuse or **investigate**

Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily

Stay calm

Listen to what is being said

Give time to the child / person to say what they want

Reassure that they have done the right thing in telling

Recording in writing what was said as soon as possible and advise management / Designated Child Protection Officer.

All incidents must be reported to a Designated Officer, who will take the responsibility to implement child protection procedures. We have a legal responsibility to report any disclosure of abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Indicators of Abuse

Child abuse refers to any ill-treatment of a child, either through inflicting actual harm by knowingly not preventing harm, or by failing to provide proper care. Child abuse is not restricted to any one geographical, sociological or economical situation. Abuse can happen anytime, anywhere and by anyone. We all have a responsibility to protect children and we need to understand the signs and symptoms of abuse.

There are different types of abuse, and a child may suffer more than one type.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent a child's physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute abuse.

Physical indicators

- Injuries in various stages of healing, especially burns and bruises
- More injuries than usually seen in children of the same age
- Injuries scattered on many areas of the body
- Bruises or burns in patterns that suggest intentional infliction
- Any injury that does not match or is inconsistent with the description / reason given.
- Injuries on areas of the body not consistent with normal childhood injuries.

Behavioural indicators

- No expectation of parental comfort
- Overly friendly or withdrawn
- Fear to return home, or fear of a parent / adult figure
- Hitting out at other children on a regular and consistent basis
- Changes in normal behaviour or development, i.e. bedwetting, etc

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, having severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making children feel they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or only valued for what they can do for another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted.

Physical indicators

- Speech disorder
- Failure to thrive
- Lack of attachment to a care giver
- Lack of confidence / low self-esteem

Behavioural indicators

- Eating disorder
- Phobias, i.e. fear of something
- Sudden changes in behaviour, i.e. withdrawn
- Inability to form relationships / attachments.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child 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 or non-penetrative acts, or subjecting the child to pornographic material. Talking to them in a sexually explicit manner is also a form of sexual abuse.

Physical indicators

- Painful urination or defecation
- Bleeding / bruising around genitals

Behavioural indicators

- Withdrawn
- Sudden change in behaviour, i.e. reverting to an earlier stage of development
- Exhibit complicated sexual or seductive behaviour, including inappropriate language or play
- Refusal to wash / clean or be bathed / changed
- Low self-esteem / self-confidence

Bullying

Bullying may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying is defined as deliberate, hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping)
- Verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, threats,)
- Emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group).

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs and is likely to seriously impair the child's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing; failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger; failing to ensure that the child receives appropriate medical care or treatment; lack of stimulation; or lack of supervision. It may also include neglecting a child's basic emotional needs.

Physical indicators

- Underweight / overweight
- Poor hygiene
- Clothing soiled or inappropriate to weather conditions, etc
- Unattended dental / medical problems
- Poor sleep and / or eating patterns

Behavioural indicators

- Dull, inactive, little energy or falling asleep
- Constant hunger and requests for food or hiding food
- Inability to concentrate
- Inability to form relationships with others.

Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

This list is not meant to be complete or exhaustive, and the presence of one or more of these indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place.

Other areas could include;

- Specific forms of abuse. For example; Honour based violence, abusive images of children, forced marriage.
- Children and Young people with increased vulnerabilities. For example; Children with disability, domestic violence.
- Children and Young People's behaviour. For example; peer abuse, self-harm, bullying

Sexting

Sexting as defined by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) is **'the production and/or sharing of sexual photos and videos of and by young people who are under the age of 18'**. Sexting can leave a child vulnerable to bullying, blackmail, online grooming or abuse. It's a criminal offence to create or share explicit images of a child, even if the person doing it is a child.

'Sexting' does not include the sharing of sexual photos and videos of under 18 year olds with or by adults.

This is a form of child sexual abuse and must be referred to the police.

If an incident involving 'sexting' comes to your attention, report it to your Designated Child Protection Officer immediately.

- Never view, download or share the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this is illegal.
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a child has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the child to delete it.
- Do not ask the child/children who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- Do not share information about the incident to other members of staff, the child/children it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any child involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the Designated Child Protection Officer.

We stress, however, that it is not the responsibility of managers to prove that abuse is taking place. Instead, it is their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting them to the Designated Officer, who in turn will report any concerns to Social Services.

It is the policy of Carryduff Play Care Centre to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults by protecting them from all forms of maltreatment, exploitation, physical, emotional, sexual abuse and neglect.

We do this by

- being registered and monitored by Social Services
- ensuring all staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised
- requesting names of two referees and following up
- having each staff member, student or volunteer police and health-checked by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- notifying Social Services of any changes of staff.

Staff and volunteers adhere to guidelines and ensure:

- children and vulnerable adults are encouraged to be as independent as possible when going to the toilet.
- nothing of a personal nature that children or vulnerable adults can do for themselves is done by staff.
- staff never spend excessive time alone with a child or vulnerable adult.
- if a child / vulnerable adult has an accident at the toilet and requests help to change clothing, assistance will be given. Where a child needs to be washed and changed, the parent will be informed when collecting the child (see Intimate Care Policy).
- if a child spills milk or gets wet when playing with water, dry clothing will be provided and the child encouraged to change him/herself.
- staff do not make unnecessary physical contact with children or vulnerable adults. However there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort and reassurance for a distressed child.
- children can only be collected by those named on the permission records. Staff will request photographic identification where they don't know the person authorised to collect. Two staff will always be present to supervise the collection of playgroup children.
- those collecting children from the Day Care and Play Care must sign the 'Signing Out Sheet'.

The staff have a duty to ensure that a detailed record is kept, if any signs, symptoms or concerns of a suspicious or disturbing nature are observed. This is done by the member of staff/trainee/volunteer who became aware of these, writing a detailed and factual observation of what she/he has seen or heard.

Where an immediate concern exists about the safety or welfare of a child or young person the Designated Officer should contact the PSNI without delay so that an emergency protective response can be made. A referral may also be made directly to the PSNI where a crime is alleged or suspected.

If the Designated officer has a concern about the safety or welfare of a child or young person in circumstances other than an emergency, they should contact the HSCT Gateway service in the relevant HSCT to inform the Gateway Team. Parents / carers will also be informed when information is passed to social services. However, should it be the parent / carer who is suspected of abuse, or should we feel that sharing this information with the parent /carer would be to the detriment of the child / vulnerable adult, or anyone involved in the source of information, we will reserve the right to not disclose this information.

The MIFC (Media Initiative for Children) Respecting Difference Programme

While attending playgroup, as part of the curriculum, the children participate in the MIFC (Media Initiative for Children) Respecting Difference Programme.

“The MIFC is an intervention programme aimed at improving long term outcomes so that children, practitioners/teachers, parents and communities become more aware of diversity and difference issues and positively change attitudes and behaviours to those who are different.” – Early Years (The Organisation for Young Children)

The programme combines a series of media messages with a pre-school programme. Together they aim to build a better understanding of physical, social, cultural, religious, ethnic, race, colour and nationality differences, inclusion and bullying.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually by the management committee to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Abuse

