Child Protection Policy and Procedures

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY** Safeguarding is what we do to prevent harm, while Child Protection is the way in which we respond to harm.

It is the responsibility of Home Ed-Venturers to ensure the safety and welfare of children whilst in our care. We are committed to ensuring good practice, so that the risks to children are minimised. We will follow the appropriate procedures when responding to Child Protection issues.

**CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURE**

● All staff will be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse: physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

● We will discuss concerns with parents at the earliest opportunity (unless it is believed that this puts the child at risk of harm) and record our discussion.

● If after this discussion we remain concerned, we will make a referral to the First Response Team (accessed via bristol.gov.uk or KBSP). We would normally inform parents that we have done this and will record this referral.

● We can also call First Response on 01179036444 for advice on whether to make a referral if we are in doubt.

● If an allegation is made against one of us we will follow the appropriate Child Protection Procedure (see below), contacting First Response if a child appears to have been harmed or is at risk of significant harm. Additionally, we will contact the Bristol Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on: 0117 903 7795 within one working day of an allegation being brought to our attention.

● We will only share concerns or records with those that need to know.

● We are aware of the need to monitor for peer-to-peer abuse.

**IF ABUSE IS DISCLOSED** Home Ed-Venturers is committed to ensuring that it meets its Child Protection responsibilities by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively.

We will:

● Stay calm

● Listen to what the child is saying

● Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling us

● Ensure that any questions asked are open or for clarification, not leading/closed questions. For example, an open question is: Why are you upset? Is there anything else you would like to tell me? A closed/leading question is: Are you afraid to go home because your Mum will hit you?

● Not ask the child to repeat what they have said for another member of staff; if the matter is to be investigated further it will be done so by trained professionals.

● Not promise the child that this can be kept secret, as subsequent disclosure could then lead to the child feeling betrayed. Explain that we are obliged to inform other people.

● Reassure the child that the people who will be informed will help to keep them safe.

● Record as soon as possible and use the actual words used by the child. Try to make the notes as detailed as possible, including when and where the conversations took place. Draw a diagram, if appropriate, to show the position of any bruises or marks the child shows us, trying to indicate the size, shape and colour.

● Keep all records factual. Be aware of not making assumptions or interpretations of what

the child is telling us. Store all records securely.

● Discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Veronika) responsible for child protection. If the allegations implicate the DSL, the concerns should be discussed with the other session Leader (Jack).

● If appropriate, inform parents/carers that we are going to report our suspicions/concerns. This might not always be possible and should not put the child or ourselves at risk. When you report an incident, First Response will ask if the parent/carer has been informed. If they haven’t, they will want to know the reasons why.

● If possible, report this information to an appropriate agency. First Response will need to be informed. We can ask for help from First Response by phone or by using the online Request for Help form (see link in ‘further information’). First Response will assess your call and pass you onto an appropriate agency.

● The person to whom the disclosure was made should ensure that the child who has disclosed

the information is informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect.

**IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED**

● The member of staff should keep monitoring the child’s behaviour, making a note of any particular concerns (when, where and what happened).

● Discuss concerns with the DSL (Veronika).

● The child’s parents/carers should be spoken at the earliest opportunity to ascertain if there is a known reason for a change in behaviour (e.g. a change in make-up, death of family member, pet).

● If abuse is taking place, we will not assume the parents/carers are causing it and keep an open

mind. There may be other family members, friends or other individuals who are causing it.

● Any member of staff or volunteer can contact First Response to discuss any concerns they have and seek guidance before actually reporting any child protection issues. It is appropriate to seek support from the DSL to confirm appropriate action to take.

● If we are still concerned about the welfare of the child, this information must be passed on to the appropriate agency. It is important to remember that if we report concerns, we are not reporting the parents/carers– we are reporting to protect the welfare of the child.

● If appropriate, inform parents/carers that we are going to report our suspicions/concerns. This might not always be possible and should not put the child or ourselves at risk. When we report an incident, First Response will ask if the parent/carer has been informed. If they haven’t, they will want to know the reasons why.

If First Response has been contacted and they pass us to Children’s Social Care (Social Services), Social Care should let us know that they are responding to what we have told them. It is unlikely that we will be told what action has been taken unless it has implications for the setting. If we have not heard from the Social Care team, it may be appropriate to contact them to ensure that the details you gave them have been taken into consideration and acted upon.

**IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY** If we think a child is in immediate danger we will telephone the police on 999. In all other circumstances we need to refer the matter to First Response and follow the procedure described in the section above.

In a medical emergency our first action may need to be one of the following:

● Telephone for an ambulance, or

● Ask the parent to take the child to the hospital at once, or

● Take the child ourselves.

The child is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and they must be involved as soon as is practical, unless to do so would put the child at immediate risk of harm. Having taken the necessary emergency action it is important that we make immediate contact with First Response.

**IF A STAFF ALLEGATION IS MADE, OR YOU SUSPECT A MEMBER OF STAFF OR VOLUNTEER OF ABUSE OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR** If it appears that a staff member or volunteer has:

● Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or

● Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or

● Behaved in an inappropriate way towards a child which may indicate that they are unsuitable to work with children, then these procedures must be followed:

● Record the concerns and report them to the DSL (Veronika)

● The DSL will take steps to ensure that during the remainder of the working day that particular member of staff is not left alone with any children.

It may be clear in some cases, where a child has been injured and/or there is clear evidence of

significant harm or risk of significant harm, that an immediate referral must be made to the

police, First Response or emergency services. In addition:

The DSL will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) WITHIN 1 WORKING DAY of receiving the report of an allegation.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Telephone: 0117 903 7795 or Work Mobile: 07795 091020

We will then follow the LADO’s advice on how to deal with allegations against staff. We will take

advice from the LADO on how and when to inform the parents of the child. If the concern is regarding the DSL, the above procedure will be followed but the report will be made to the other Session Leader (Jack).

**SUPPORT TO STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS** The DSL (Veronika) will fully support all members of staff in following this procedure.

Following an allegation or investigation:

● Staff and volunteers who work with issues of child protection may themselves need support in dealing with the emotional distress this can cause. They can talk to Veronika and other members of staff and reach out to the wider forest school community for peer-to-peer support.

● Staff or volunteers may also be subject to allegations of abusing children in relation to their work for the setting. While support will be offered to these individuals by the setting, we will ensure that the agency dealing with the matter is given all assistance in pursuing any investigation and the Bristol LADO will be informed. The disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

**Appendix A – Useful contacts**

1. Staff Lead Practitioner responsible for Child Protection (Designated Safeguarding Lead): Veronika Simon

2. Alternative Session Leader support: Jack Cullimore

3. Referral Agencies-

If you are concerned about a child or young person or think they need some help and/or need advice and guidance:

First Response – 0117 9036444 (Calls to First Response may result in direct referral to a Social Work Team)

Disabled Children Team (all Bristol) - Tel: 0117 9038250

Out of Office Hours Tel: 01454 615 165 (Emergency Duty Team)

Email (all Bristol) childprotection@bristol.gov.uk

Police: Non-emergency – Tel: 101 Emergency – Tel: 999

4. For Staff Allegations Contact:

Local Area Designated Officer - Telephone 0117 903 7795

Support and advice: South West Child Protection Procedures (online guidance) www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/

Childline -Tel: 0800 1111 (open 24 hours)

National Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) -Tel: 0800 800 500

NSPCC FGM helpline: 0800 028 3550 or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.

Bristol Safeguarding - Keep Bristol Safe Partnership- https://bristolsafeguarding.org/

BAND Development and Support Worker –Tel: 0117 954 2128

Last reviewed: 9th October 2024

Signed by: Veronika Simon