

# Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

## **Principle**

Little Friends is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children; promoting their rights and best interests.

This policy outlines the protection of children by identifying clear instructions in accordance with the legislative framework of The Children (NI) Order 1995, taking into consideration the five main principles of the Order, the first being “the welfare of the child is paramount”.

We follow The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) guidelines. The SBNI was established under the Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011. The 2011 Act establishes a statutory objective for the SBNI, attributes a number of functions to it and imposes a number of duties upon it. The primary aim of the SBNI is co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Northern Ireland. The 2011 Act requires member organisations to co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

## **Policy**

Everyone at Little Friends who comes into contact with children and their families have a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At Little Friends management/staff/volunteers will work with children, parents/carers and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

- Little Friends promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, culture traditions and home background.
- Little Friends promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- Little Friends promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- Little Friends helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- Little Friends works with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

**Important** - if any staff member has a reasonable concern that a child may be at risk of or is suffering abuse or neglect they can pass this information to the relevant agencies **without** parental consent! The Gateway Team is the appropriate social services department to refer concerns to.

## **Procedure**

In accordance with Trust Guidelines, Our Duty to Care and Social Services at Little Friends we will endeavour to safeguard children by:

### ***Key commitment 1***

Little Friends is committed to building a culture of safety in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

*Staff/Students/Trainees/ Parents and Volunteers*

- Our Designated Child Protection Officers are:

Clare Waugh

Sandra Brady

Nadene Mc Evoy

Karen McGrath

Catherine McPolin

Joanne Conlon

At Little Friends we endeavour to ensure that:

- All staff and parents/carers are made aware of our safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Little Friends provides adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out 'enhanced disclosure' checks with the current up to date vetting procedures before posts can be confirmed. No person will be placed in a position (either paid or unpaid) which involves contact with children without being properly and effectively vetted.
- Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- The setting adheres to the Health and Social Care Trust requirements in respect of references and criminal record checks for staff/students/trainees and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Students/trainees/volunteers do not work unsupervised.
- Little Friends adheres to the relevant guidelines in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
- Little Friends has a procedure for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
- There are security steps in place to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.

### ***Key commitment 2***

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set out.

### **Types of Abuse**

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse;
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Female Genital Mutilation

**Physical Abuse** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**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

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is referred to as female circumcision and is defined by the World Health Organisation as a range of procedures which involve the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or any other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reasons. FGM should not be seen within context of culture, religion or tradition and should be responded to within the context of Child Abuse.

- All those working with children are aware that abuse of children can take different forms – physical, emotional and sexual, as well as neglect.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or through changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key worker/staff member makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the setting leader who is acting as the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- Little Friends will refer concerns to the Gateway team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.
- Those involved will take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to children or by asking questions of children.

*The management team will use detailed procedures and reporting format when making a referral to Gateway. Child protection concerns should be reported without delay to the appropriate HSC Trust*

- Contact Early Years Link Social Worker/Early Years Team.
- Where a child is already known to Social Services and has a social worker, we will contact them directly.

**Contact details are:**

Social Worker – Shereen Lyness- Feenan  
Banbridge H & SC Centre  
10 Old Hospital Road  
Banbridge  
BT32 3GN  
**028406 21600**

*Recording suspicions of abuse*

Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour, deterioration in general well-being, unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect, a member of staff will:

- Listen to the child, offer reassurance and give assurance that he/she will take action.
- Not question the child.
- Make a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
  - the date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
  - the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible;
  - the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time;
  - the names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file which is kept securely and confidentially.

*Making a referral to Gateway*

- Little Friends will follow any procedures that the Gateway team has in place.
- Little Friends will also inform our link social worker that we have made a referral to the Gateway team.
- Where the child already has a social worker, Little Friends will contact them directly.
- Little Friends will retain a copy of any forms filled in for Gateway in the child's personal file.
- All staff are aware of the referral procedures for recording and reporting.

**Contact details for Gateway Team are:**

Gateway Service for children (free from landlines only)	<b>0800 783 7745</b>
Initial Referral Contact Number	<b>028 3741 5285</b>
Out of hours Emergency Service Number	<b>028 9504 9999</b>
PSNI	<b>101</b>
NI Public Services Ombudsman	<b>0800 343 424</b>
PSNI Central Referral Unit	<b>028 9025 9299</b>

*Informing parents*

- 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 guidance does not allow this.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases the investigating officer will inform parents.

*Liaison with other agencies*

- Little Friends will work with the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.
- All staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.

- Little Friends has procedures for contacting the Health and Social Care Trust on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and the Trust to work well together.
- Little Friends will notify the Health and Social Care Trust of any incident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children.
- If a referral is to be made to the Gateway team, Little Friends will act within the area's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.

#### *Allegations against staff*

- Little Friends ensures that all parents know the complaints policy if they have concerns regarding the behaviour or actions of staff/students/trainees/volunteers within the setting.
- Little Friends will follow the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust when responding to any complaint that a parent/carer has put forward.
- Little Friends will respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff, student/trainee/volunteer within the setting, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- Management will refer any such complaint immediately to the Gateway team and the link social worker to investigate. Little Friends is aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- The Management of Little Friends will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the Gateway team/Early Years Team.
- Where the management team and Health and Social Care Trust agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, management will suspend the member of staff/volunteer/student/trainee, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as the children and families throughout the process.

#### *Disciplinary action*

- Where a member of staff/student/trainee/volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children, management will notify Gateway/Early Years and the Independent Safeguarding Authority of relevant information so that individuals who pose a threat to children (and vulnerable adults), can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

#### **Key commitment 3**

Little Friends is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout child protection training for staff. Little Friends is also committed to empowering young children, through our curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

#### *Training*

- Management will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and that they are aware of the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines for making referrals.
- Management will ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting.
- Management will ensure that staff/volunteers are trained in Safeguarding Children/Child Protection in line with current regulations and this will be reviewed annually at staff appraisals where training needs can be identified.

#### *Planning*

- The layout of the room allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff/volunteer/students/trainees in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

### *Curriculum*

- Little Friends introduces key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and that they may develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- Little Friends creates a culture of value and respect for every individual within the setting, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.

We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for all children.

### *Confidentiality*

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust.

### *Support to families*

- Little Friends believes in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff/students/trainees/volunteers in the group.
- Little Friends makes clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the Health and Social Care Trust.
- Little Friends follows child protection guidelines as set out by Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.

### **Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCNI)**

Little Friends is aware of the referral system of UNOCNI – Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland. The registering social worker and the Gateway Team will keep us informed of any changes and training available.

**Contact details are:** As Above

### **Links with other policies:**

Anti-Bullying Policy

Complaints Policy

Confidentiality Policy

Equal Opportunities Policy

Staff development and training

Whistleblowing Policy

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_