

Safe Guarding Children Policy

The Study Zone believes that every child has the right to be kept safe, child abuse in any form is unacceptable and the welfare of the children in our care shall always be held paramount. The Safe Guarding Children Policy and its procedures comply with relevant legislation and guidance; however it will be reviewed at regular intervals. The policy shall be available for staff, parents, volunteers and if requested children.

Emma Hill, our Manager is The Study Zone's Lead Practitioner. She has been trained to use the common assessment process. All concerns regarding the wellbeing of the children in our care will be brought to her attention. She will then act in line with guidance issued by the Children's Workforce Development Council.

All staff will undertake the Basic Awareness in Child Protection course offered by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board through the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

Recognising child abuse

This Club recognises that the play workers are the first stage in the care of the child in the club. The play workers are well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour or failure to develop or thrive. It must be remembered that child abuse can also occur by one minor to another, this must never be overlooked as a possibility whilst it may be hoped to be unlikely.

Categories for concern are:

- **NEGLECT**
The persistent or severe failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs which results in serious impairment of the child's health, emotional stability or development. Neglect may include failing to provide adequate food, shelter, or clothing, or failing to protect them from physical harm or ill health.
- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
Physical injury to a child (e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating) - reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. Deliberately causing a child's ill health can also constitute physical abuse.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE**
The involvement of a child in sexual activities through force or enticement, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Activities may include physical contact, penetrative or non-penetrative acts, showing pornographic material, or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour.
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
Often present in child protection incidents, it can constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse includes persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment, rejection or torture causing severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of the child.

If a member of staff becomes aware of the above and is concerned for the child, The Club Manager will be informed immediately. The Club Manager and the Principal will discuss the matter and agree how to proceed following the guidelines and where appropriate involve the relevant agencies (parents, foster-carers, social services, police etc.) When necessary they will invite parents to join them in completing a common assessment.

The Manager might phone

Social Services Initial Response Team - 020 8891 7969.

Outside of office hours - Emergency Out-of-Hours team - 020 8744 2442.

Local police specialist team who deal with Child Protection - 020 8247 6331.

The Club Manager will keep the play workers and Principal up to date with developments; a copy of the policy will be given to all staff and volunteers on their induction and a chance to ask any questions they have will be provided.

Staff will be aware of their requirements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of child abuse and the procedures outlined below. Once the manager has been informed, appropriate action shall be taken to investigate the allegations whilst upholding the club's duties to protect the safety of children and uphold fair processes for staff, volunteers and students.

Safe Caring

Every attempt will be made to offer support for children whilst at the Club and it is hoped that the Club will provide an environment in which they can spend the Club day in complete confidence and safety. To aid this:

- Every effort will be made to minimise the time members of staff are left alone with children. Staff should avoid situations when they might be alone with a child, if they find themselves alone the door of the room should be always be kept open. Staff should maintain a heightened level of awareness knowing not only who is in each room but what is happening in each room and on The Green, moving about the building to even out the distribution of staff at all times.
- Any inappropriate physical contact made by children towards staff should be fully recorded in the incident book.
- Staff will be aware of how and where they touch children given their age and emotional understanding. Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact will be avoided at all times.
- All allegations made by a child against a member of staff will be fully recorded, including any actions. If a witness was present they shall sign the record to confirm it. Nationally prescribed procedures will be followed in dealing with allegations against staff, volunteers and visiting adults (see below).
- Staff must also be particularly aware of situations where there may be an abuser in the family.
- Staff must also be aware that disabled children and those in need are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Dealing with Allegations

All allegations shall be treated sensitively and seriously; on discovering an allegation of abuse the case shall be referred to the local statutory safeguarding agencies.

Staff are encouraged to support their professional judgement if they suspect abuse has, or is taking place. Full written records of all reported incidents will be produced and maintained including full details of the alleged incident; details of the parties involved, their explanations or evidence and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff including any relevant dates or times. The club will demonstrate care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse and any records will be signed, dated and kept confidentially.

The Study Zone will take seriously any allegations of possible child abuse made against its staff or volunteers.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to report any incident which could lead to an allegation of inappropriate behaviour by another member of staff or volunteer. Staff must report verbally immediately to the Manager in charge of the session and follow this with a written report. If the person concerned is the Manager the matter should be reported directly to the Principal.

If any allegation is made against a member of staff, which falls within the disciplinary category of *Gross misconduct*, reference must be made to Appendix 5 - **Working Together to Safeguard Children**, Procedures for managing allegations against people who work with children.

Where an allegation of gross misconduct is made the Principal must be informed immediately. Contact must be made immediately with the Local Safeguarding Children Board Designated Officer on 020 8744 2442 who will advise on what action may be taken. OFSTED must be notified after their advice has been sought

This would include instances when they were suspected of

- Behaving in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committing a criminal offence against, or related to, a child
- Behaving towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children
- incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs,
- physical violence, bullying

The Manager will investigate the matter following the procedures of the Grievance and Disciplinary policy and those of the Safeguarding Children policy. The Manager will inform the Principal that an incident has been alleged.

Any children involved in allegations must be comforted and reassured

When a child makes an allegation or disclosure, the member of staff concerned will:

1. Listen fully to all the child has to say, writing down and dating what they are told.
2. Make no observable judgement.
3. Ask open questions that encourage the child to speak in their own words.
4. Ensure the child is safe, comfortable and not left alone.
5. Make no promises that cannot be kept; such as promising not to tell anybody what they are being told.

See attached sheet of helpful responses and phrases to use if a child begins to make an allegation or disclosure to you.

Emergency Situations

In most situations the above procedures can be followed, however if the rare situation arises where the child is in acute pain, bleeding or in medical distress it may be necessary to seek immediate medical attention and enter a full investigation after this.

- Contact the social services department or police child protection team and agree on an immediate plan of action.
- If necessary, take the child to the nearest Accident and Emergency department, telephone if possible to request a Paediatric registrar. When trying to obtain parental consent for medical treatment careful discussion with medical staff is necessary if staff feel informing parents or carers may also be dangerous to the child's health.
- Remember to record and sign all that you do, names of people you speak to and the date and time of any action taken

Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies

- The following shall be done if the manager believes the child has been - or is in grave danger of being - subject to abuse:
- Any referral should initially be discussed with the family concerned. The only exception will be when there are Child Protection concerns and discussion may put the child at greater risk. In these instances the referrer may wish to discuss the referral with Services for Children and Families before the family is notified of the referral.
- Contact the local social services department and communicate as much information as possible about the allegation and related incidents
- The safety, protection and interests of children must take precedence at all times. The manager and staff shall work with and support parents/carers as far as is legally possible.
- The club will assist both social services and police as far as they can during the investigation of abuse or neglect, including disclosing written and verbal information and evidence.

Finally, The Study Zone recognises the stress and distress which dealing with child abuse can cause and will ensure that staff who have to deal with a case of child abuse receive appropriate help and support from the manager and, if necessary, and outside consultant. Care shall continue to be taken with the child who has suffered abuse, ensuring they feel as comfortable as possible at all times whilst at the centre.

The Safe Guarding Children Policy shall be reviewed annually. It may be necessary for further reviews if the policy is ever brought into question either by an individual or a particular incident.