



Little Ladybird Creche & Montessori

Policy #5

CHILD PROTECTION

Introduction

Children First, the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines on protecting children from abuse, clearly places a duty on children's services providers to protect children in their care.

The Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006 also require that services develop clear written guidelines on identifying and reporting child abuse.

It is essential to ensure that a service is provided where everyone can feel safe and secure and no one suffers abuse of any kind. All children have a right to be protected from child abuse or neglect.

Definitions

*You need to include definitions of **Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse** here.*

*For definitions, you should refer to **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children**. The full report is available to download at: www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html*

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. The giving of information to the appropriate people for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality. It must be clearly understood that information that is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without contacting the person who provided that information. Anyone who receives information from colleagues about possible or actual abuse must treat it as having been given in confidence. (Children First, 1999, 5.3.3)



Policy Statement

Environment

We will do all that is possible to ensure that we provide a place where everyone can feel safe and secure and no one suffers abuse of any kind. We are guided in this by **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People.**

We will ensure that everyone is supported and listened to and that each person understands their responsibility to treat all as equal.

Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.

Reporting Child Abuse

It is the responsibility of all staff members working in this service to report any suspicions and/or allegations of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect to the Health Service Executive (HSE) (in an emergency we will contact the Garda Síochána).

Parents/carers will be kept informed and appropriate confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

If a member of staff is suspected or accused of abuse, the matter will be reported immediately and other users of the service will be protected. In some instances this may mean the suspension of staff from duty.

It is our responsibility to report suspicions and/or allegations but it is not the responsibility of this childcare service or its staff to carry out investigations. This is the role of the HSE and the Garda Síochána.

Responsibility for child protection and welfare issues is delegated to a nominated senior staff member. The Designated Child Protection Person in this facility is

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The Manager is responsible for ensuring that all staff members know who the Designated Child Protection Person is.

All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse will be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the best interests of the child (Children First, 1999)

In making any report, the following must be taken into consideration:

- **The protection and safety of the child is paramount**
- **The principle of natural justice – a person is innocent until proven otherwise**
- **The principle of confidentiality – only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and the number of people to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum**

Care is monitored throughout the day to minimise the risk of child abuse or neglect.

We will ensure that:



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- All workers are suitable to work with children.
- All workers are carefully selected and appropriately vetted.
- All workers are adequately supervised.

Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.

Staff members are provided with support in the form of training, regular supervision and opportunities to discuss with the manager, any concern in relation to a child or family – a concern is never too trivial.

Procedures & Practices

The following Basic Principles of Child Protection Practice in Early Years Settings¹ will apply:

- The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- There is respect for children in their ordinary physical care – staff members should talk to children rather than each other, and should personalise all their interactions. Information should be shared with children, their opinions should be sought and encouraged and their growing abilities to care for themselves should be acknowledged. The level of contact around intimate care should be sensitively dealt with and a child's need for privacy in the toilet, for example, should be respected in accordance with his or her self-care abilities. All workers should be guided by individual children in expressions of affection (see Interactions Policy)
- Children have a right to be listened to, heard and taken seriously. Adults should also observe their body language. Children's concerns and feelings will be respected. Their questions will always be answered honestly in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Families have a right to be respected and consulted in relation to their child's welfare.
- Where there is a conflict of interest between the needs and rights of children and the needs and rights of their parents/carers, the child's needs and rights will be paramount.
- We are committed to working collaboratively with all agencies and disciplines concerned with the protection and welfare of children.
- We will respect confidentiality of information entrusted to us but will not treat as confidential information which needs to be shared to protect children.
- We will always fully consider factors such as the child's gender, age and stage of development, religion, culture and race in our work.
- We will endeavour to raise awareness in relation to children's welfare and protection among parents, carers, workers and the community generally.
- We will employ 'best practice' in our recruitment and selection policies and practices so as to minimise the risk to children in our services (see Recruitment Policy).
- We will employ agreed and positive ways of dealing with children's behaviour. Their troublesome or disruptive behaviour will be kept separate from themselves as individuals and labels or nicknames will be avoided. Safe methods for dealing

¹ 'Children First' and Dr. Helen Buckley, TCD – synopsis of presentation made at NCNA Annual Conference, March 2002.



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physically with children will be agreed and consistently applied (see Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy).

Protecting children during service provision

- Each child will be under the care of a specific adult and the adult must know where the child is at all times.
- Children will be under the care of a minimum of two adults at all times.
- All entrances must be kept secure.
- An adult will be present close to the main entrance of the building and during all hours of service.
- Parents/carers are allowed access to **their** children's rooms at all times.
- Playground gates are secured to prevent unauthorised access.
- Children will not be released to anyone under 18 (including siblings) that staff members feel is not responsible enough to ensure the welfare of the child.
- Children under 10 are not permitted to leave the service unaccompanied.
- Children 10 and over are permitted to leave for school and regularly scheduled activities only with written parent/carer permission.
- Parents/carers are contacted when children do not arrive at the service when expected.
- All visitors are signed in and out and are accompanied while in the building.
- Volunteers and students are supervised at all times.
- It is possible to view each room used for the childcare service through a window in the doors or walls.
- It is possible to view into storerooms etc. or they are kept locked during hours of operation.
- Lights are left on in all rooms including closets with windows, toilets, offices and storage areas when the building is in use.
- Nothing is placed over windows to prevent or obstruct viewing.
- Children's arrivals and departures are supervised (see Arrivals and Departures Policy).
- Behaviour policies and practices promote the development of children. Staff must never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child (see Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy).
- Records are kept accurately and up to date (see Records and Record Keeping Policy).
- Training on child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.
- Staff are supervised and supported and appraisals are carried out regularly (see Staff Support and Supervision Policy).
- Staff must be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- Physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children but should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- The personal space, safety and privacy of all individuals in the service are to be respected.
- **Staff members must not give lifts in their cars to individual children unless accompanied by another member of staff and with the prior knowledge of the child's parent/carer.**



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Recruitment and selection

It is recommended that shortlisting of candidates be carried out by at least two people on the basis of agreed criteria. Most interview panels should have three people but not less than two. It is also important to ensure that written records of the interview assessments are kept for each candidate.

Following interviews and selection of candidates we will:

- Take up references before any appointment is offered (references will be checked both orally and in writing) to verify the applicant's identity and to check their employment history, qualifications and experience.
- Offer the post subject to vetting procedures being carried out.
- Offer the job on a trial basis.
- Provide induction training that includes the service's policies on creating a safe environment for all.
- Make clear that an annual appraisal process exists.
- Arrange appropriate supervision.
- Ensure the new recruit is aware of the complaints procedure.

Designated Child Protection Officer

*Under the Children First Guidelines, services are required to designate an appropriate member of staff to deal with Child Protection and Welfare Concerns. See Factsheet 7 of **Our Duty to Care** for the Role and Responsibility of a Designated Officer – here you need to include this information and the name, position and contact details of your designated person or a reference to where that information is written.*

Responding to concerns

If a child hints at or tells you that he or she is being abused, it must be handled very sensitively, and in the following way:

- Stay calm and listen – give the child time to say what she or he wants.
- Don't ask leading questions or details, or make suggestions.
- Don't stop the child recalling significant events, but don't make him or her repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Reassure the child, but don't promise to keep it a secret.
- Explain what needs to be done next.
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible.

The information should then be passed on according to this Child Protection Policy.

All observations, discussions, and records relating to concerns must include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which may be relevant and should be signed and dated.

If a staff member receives information in relation to abuse they must never indicate that either the information or its source will remain secret.



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Reporting

Where reasonable grounds exist for the reporting of suspected or actual child abuse, a report should be made to the HSE in person, by telephone or in writing. Reports may be made to the Child Care Manager or directly to the social worker. Each HSE office has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns.

In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of HSE staff, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station.

Include contact details for your local Garda Station here.

In making any report an individual needs to take the following into consideration:

- That the protection and safety of the child is paramount.
- The principle of natural justice – a person is innocent until proven otherwise.
- The principle of confidentiality – only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and that the number that needs to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum.

Anyone who reports a suspicion of abuse, provided the report is made in good faith (not maliciously), is protected under the **Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**.

Communication Plan

All parents/carers must be informed of the Child Protection Policy on registration. Staff members will check with parents/carers that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the Parents'/Carers' Handbook. This policy will also be included in staff, *students and volunteers (where relevant)* induction. Training in Child Protection will be provided to all staff and is compulsory.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/carers in the Policy Folder located in the main office.

Parents/carers may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/carers and staff will receive written notification of any updates.

Review Date

Date:

Person responsible:



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Related Policies

- Confidentiality Policy
- Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy
- Arrivals and Departures Policy
- Staff Support and Supervision Policy
- Staff Training and Development Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Interactions Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Records and Record Keeping Policy

References

- Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006
- **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children**
The full report can be downloaded at: www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html
- **Our Duty to Care** is available at www.dohc.ie/publications/our_duty_to_care.html
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Child Care Act, 1991
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- The Data Protection Act, 1988 and 2003
- The Education Act, 1998
- The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- Parents Who Listen Protect Campaign HSE 2007

Contact Information [Who to contact for more information]

Name:

Policy Created

Date:

Signatures

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