



Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

Principles

Acorns Day Care 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”.

Policy

Everyone at Acorns who comes into contact with children and their families have a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At Acorns management, staff and 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.

- Acorns promotes children’s rights 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, cultural traditions and home background.
- Acorns promotes children’s rights to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- Acorns promotes children’s rights to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- Acorns helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- Acorns works with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.
- Staff must ensure that anyone who collects a child from the nursery is over 18 years old. Unless they are a parent.

Procedure

In accordance with the Trust Guidelines, our duty to care and Social Services at Acorns we will endeavour to safeguard children by:

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

Our Designated Child Protection Officers are **Leahanne Baird, Heather Abbott, Sara Peoples, Stacey Rodgers, Valerie Burrows** There will be at least one of the staff members named above available from the main nursery between the hours of 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday.

At Acorns we endeavor to ensure;

- All staff and parents/carers are made aware of our safeguarding policy and procedures
- Acorns provides adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out 'enhanced disclosures' checks with the current up to date vetting procedures before posts can be confirmed. No person will be placed in a position 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.
- Acorns 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.

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.

Recognising 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; and
- Exploitation.

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.

Exploitation¹ 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.

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

Ref - Department of Health, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. (Version 2.0 August 2017)

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- All those working with children are aware that abuse of children can take different forms - Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Neglect and Exploitation.
- 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 appearances, their behaviour or their play.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's staff member makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the on duty Designated officer. The information is stored in the child's personal file.
- Acorns 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 a referral to Gateway.
- 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:

Early Years Team
Team
Ellis Street
Carrickfergus

Gateway Team
Northern Trust

Out of hours Emergency
TEL: 02894 468833
(After 5pm each evening)
(Weekends and bank holidays)

TEL: 02893 315112
(Mon - Fri 9 - 5 pm)

TEL: 0300 1234 333
(Mon - Fri 9-5pm)

Recording suspicions of abuse

Where a child makes a comment 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

- Acorns will follow any procedures that the Gateway Team has in place.
- Acorns 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, Acorns will contact them directly.
- Acorns will retain a copy of any forms filled in for Gateway Team in the child's personal file.
- All staff are aware of the referral procedures for recording and reporting.

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

- Acorns will work with the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.
- All staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- Acorns 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 Trust to work well together.
- If a referral is to be made to the Gateway Team, Acorns 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

- Acorns ensures that all parents know the complaints policy if they have concerns regarding the behaviour or actions of staff, student/trainee/volunteer within the setting.
- Acorns will follow the guidance of the Health and Social Care when responding to any complaint that a parent/carer has put forward.
- Acorns 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. Acorns is aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- Management at Acorns will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the Gateway Team/Early Years Team.
- Where the management and Health and Social Care Trust agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, management will suspend the member of staff/trainee/volunteer, 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 the individuals who pose a threat to children can be identified and barred from working with them.

Acorns is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout child protection training for staff. Acorns 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 Trust guidelines for making referrals.

Management will ensure that all staff know the procedures for recording and reporting 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 rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff/student/volunteer in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

Curriculum

Acorns introduces key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote personal, social, 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.

Acorns 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

Acorns believes in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff/students/trainees/volunteers in the group.

Acorns makes clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concern, provide information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the health and social care trust.

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 the health and social care trust guidelines.

Understanding the needs of children in Northern Ireland (UNOCNI)

Acorns is aware of the referral system of UNOCNI. The registering social worker and the Gateway team will keep us informed of any changes and training available.

Monitoring

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

Managers Signature _____

Owners Signature _____

Reviewed on :

Date _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Signed _____

Date _____

Signed _____