SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Policy

Stepping Stones Pre-school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All staff are expected to share this commitment and follow the policy and procedures to continuously promote a culture of safety.

Designated Officer is: April Middleton (Hannah Campbell during April's maternity leave)

Designated safeguarding lead is: Hannah Campbell (Main Site) Fiona Adams (Main Site) Claire Stephenson (Yellow Room) Sam Humphries (Yellow Room)

The DSL is responsible for ensuring all staff are supported, trained, understand, and can follow the safeguarding policies and procedures. The DSL is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the local Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP).

The DSL understands local Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) procedures and acts as the lead contact for local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Support Services and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Aim

Every person looking after children must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere.

As a member of the Early Years Alliance, we take account of the Early Years Alliance's 'four commitments' to provide a consistent and coherent strategy for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The four key commitments are:

1. Empower children, young people and vulnerable adults, promoting their right to be strong, resilient, actively listened to, and heard.
2. Upholds a culture of safety in which children, young people, and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of its curriculum and

service delivery.

3. Prevent harm and respond promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur, working with statutory agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for every child.
4. Increase safeguarding confidence, knowledge and good practice throughout its training and learning programmes for adults, advocating support and representation for those in greatest need.

What is safeguarding and child protection?

Safeguarding is the steps we take to keep children, young people, and adults safe on a day-to-day basis and the actions we take when we are worried about a person or the conduct of a colleague.

Child protection is the protection put in place for a child who is, or is likely to, suffer significant harm. Significant harm is defined in Section 47 of the Children Act

How we keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe

Safeguarding is of paramount importance in Stepping Stones Pre-school and is embedded in our culture.

- We actively listen to and observe children and through our curriculum promote their right to be strong, resilient, listened to and heard.
- We increase children's understanding of how to stay safe and support parents / carers to increase their knowledge by sharing information and resources.
- There are clear policies and procedures in place for reporting, recording, and managing any concerns about children, young people, or vulnerable adults. All of which adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements and relevant legislation.
- Every service has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsible for safeguarding and child protection. This includes ensuring that staff,

volunteers, agency workers, and students know the signs and signals of abuse, are trained, understand, and follow our policy and procedures.

- All staff are trained in line with the criteria set out Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding training is refreshed annually and renewed every two years. Safeguarding updates are shared regularly. The DSL ensures support, advice and guidance for all staff to meet their safeguarding responsibilities.
- All staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
- There are procedures in place for working in partnership with agencies involving a child, young person, or vulnerable adult. These procedures take account of working with families with a 'child in need' and with families in need of early help.
- There is a robust Health and Safety Policy supported by clear procedures.
- Staff and volunteers are recruited following the Safer Recruitment Policy. This includes robust recruitment checks including obtaining two written references, carrying out enhanced DBS checks and receiving certification before commencing employment / volunteering, and a probationary period.
- All staff and prospective employees know that they must disclose any information which may affect their suitability to work with children as set out in the EYFS
- There are procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against a member of staff, or any other person undertaking work whether paid or unpaid for the organisation.
- Families are encouraged to raise concerns through a clear complaints policy and procedure.
- There are robust whistleblowing procedures in place for all staff, volunteers, and students and the organisation ensures that all staff know how to use it.
- Safeguarding incidents are reviewed and reflected upon so that learning can be shared across the organisation.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Scope of the policy

This policy and associated procedures apply to all staff, agency staff, apprentices, students and volunteers working at (insert name of setting). Throughout the policy we use the term staff to refer to all these groups unless stated otherwise.

Categories and other types of abuse

The four main categories of child abuse are:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse (incorporates child sexual exploitation)
- Neglect

Other kinds of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Domestic abuse and coercive control
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Child abuse linked to a belief in spirit possession
- Child criminal exploitation and gangs
- Female genital mutilation
- Extremism / radicalisation
- Complex, multiple or organised abuse
- Forced marriage or honour-based violence
- Child victims of trafficking
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Online harm and exploitation
- Children experiencing multiple harms at the same time

Signs and signals of abuse

Staff are always alert to indicators of abuse. All staff have received training which is renewed every two years, on signs and signals of abuse in line with the EYFS and all concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Children and young people with additional vulnerabilities

Children and young people may be at increased risk due to additional vulnerabilities that arise from inequalities of race, gender, disability, language, religion, sexual orientation, or culture. Staff fully consider these vulnerabilities when there is safeguarding, or child protection matters.

Staff must be aware of the needs of very young children and exercise appropriate professional curiosity where concerns are raised.

Safeguarding and child protection roles and responsibilities

Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. All staff must understand the safeguarding policy and procedures. Staff must understand the different types of abuse and recognise the indicators of abuse and know what to do if they are worried about a child or the behaviour of a member of staff.

Safeguarding training

All staff are trained in line with the criteria set out in Annex C of the EYFS. Safeguarding training is refreshed annually and renewed every two years. The designated safeguarding lead ensures support, advice and guidance for all staff to meet their safeguarding responsibilities by:

- regular supervision
- 1:1 support
- team briefings
- group supervision
- reviewing safeguarding cases

Parental responsibility

When a child or young person is registered staff will ask who has parental responsibility for the child or young person. This is defined in the Children Act 1989 and defines who is responsible for the child or young person. If a person with parental responsibility is not to have contact with a child or young person, this will be discussed and a risk assessment put in place.

Mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities

Personal mobile phones, smart watches, and AI glasses are not to be used or worn in the setting when children and young people are present. Parents / carers and visitors are asked to put all digital devices away on entering the setting. Staff are required to store all internet-enabled devices, including phones, smart watches and AI in a secure place designated by the manager and only access them in their personal time when they are not caring for children and there are no children or young people present. Any electronic devices which are used to manage medical needs must be agreed with the manager. A risk assessment for the storage and management of devices is completed by the manager.

Photographs and videos are only taken on setting devices and stored safely in line with our Data Protection policy. Parents, carers, and visitors are not allowed to take photographs or videos in the setting.

Online safety

The following online systems and devices are used within the settings:

- Tablets for promoting and recording children's learning and development
- Computers and tablets for children's use
- Electronic / online management software (if appropriate)

Children and young people never have unsupervised access to devices with online capability, and all devices are restricted to prevent access to inappropriate content. Educators give consistent messages about the safe use of technology and support children and young people to understand the risks posed in the real and virtual world. Only reputable sites with a focus on learning are used.

Online risks include:

Content – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material

Contact – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users.

Conduct – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of or causes harm.

Educators seek to understand a child's or young person's context regarding technology within the home learning environment, including how much technology is used and for what purpose. Concerns that a child or young person is at risk or has been exposed to inappropriate online content must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a safeguarding concern. If a child or young person has experienced cyber bullying, the DSL must be informed. All concerns must be recorded on the day the concern was raised.

Dangerous Dogs

Banned dog breeds (meaning dogs to which section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
applies including the XL Bully type), must not be kept or present on the premises. This includes dogs with an exemption certificate. https://www.gov.uk/control-dog-public/banned-dogs

If the setting has reason to believe children under 12 years are left in close contact with a banned dog in a private place without adult supervision, this will be treated as a safeguarding concern and acted in line with our policy and procedures. All parents/carers are notified that banned dog breeds are not to be brought on to the premises.

Unexplained absence

Families are asked to always contact the setting if their child is going to be absent. If a child does not attend at the expected time and there is no explanation for the absence, the key person will contact the parent/carer on the first day of absence. Where no contact can be made with the parent / carer or there is a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the Absence Policy and local authority safeguarding procedures.

Accidents and injuries

When a child or young person arrives with a mark or injury, whether explained or unexplained, this is recorded. The child's parents/carers fill in an accident at home form and this is signed by the member of staff and management.

If a child is brought to the setting by someone who is not their parent / carer, the DSL will contact the parent / carer to confirm how the injury occurred.

The process of filling in a form does not override the need to follow the settings and Local Authority reporting procedures should there be concerns about an injury or mark.

The Prevent Duty

All early years settings have a duty to identify vulnerable children and young people and prevent them from being drawn into radicalisation and extremism as part of our overall safeguarding responsibilities. This is known as the Prevent duty. All staff are trained in the Prevent duty. This training is renewed every two years as a minimum. A Prevent duty Risk Assessment is in place and reviewed annually.

For very young children, the risk may be through their families and may be observed through conversation about extremist beliefs or behaviours. Children and young people may be at risk of radicalisation through online content. Online safety is a part of our curriculum, and all devices that children and young people use have restricted access.

All staff actively promote values such as democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance. These values are embedded in the curriculum.

If a member of staff is concerned about a child, or young person of their family must speak to the DSL immediately. Actions may include the prevent advice line being contacted and a report submitted through report extremism in education. Where there is a concern about a member of staff, the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) must be notified.

Information Sharing

When a parent / carer registers their child, they are made aware of our Privacy Notice which explains the circumstances under which information about their child will be shared with other agencies.
The consent of a parent / carer to share information with other professionals is always sought, unless doing so would put the child at risk of significant harm. For concerns that do not meet this threshold, then consent must be obtained, e.g. Early Help.
If a parent / carer refuses to consent for information to be shared, then the DSL must

seek the advice of local children's safeguarding team without giving any personal details. If not accessing support, this puts the child at risk of significant harm, then information must be shared with the children's safeguarding team without parental consent.

If a child protection referral has been made without the consent of the parents / carers, the DSL will seek the agreement of the children's safeguarding team to inform the parents / carers that the referral has been made and agree the information that will be shared.

Parents / Carers are not informed prior to making a referral if:

- There is a possibility that a child or young person may be put at risk of harm by discussion with a parent / carer.
- If a serious offence may have been committed, it is important that any potential police investigation is not jeopardised.
- There are potential concerns about sexual abuse, fabricated illness, FGM or forced marriage
- Contacting the parent / carer puts another person at risk, for example, where there is domestic abuse.

The decision not to inform a parent / carer before sharing information and the reason for not doing so must be recorded.

What to do if you are worried about a child

If a child or young person is believed to be at risk of immediate harm, staff must contact the police by dialing 999.

If a member of staff has a concern about a child or parent / carer they must:

- Immediately speak to the DSL
- Record their concern within one working day

Incapacitated parent or carer

If on arrival or collection of a child or young person, a member of staff has a concern about the adult that is bringing or collecting the child, they must conduct a dynamic risk assessment and take steps to keep all children safe, for example, if an adult appears to be drunk or under the influence of drugs or demonstrating angry or threatening behaviour.

The staff member may refuse the adult entry if it is safe to do so. If the adult has entered the building, they are asked to stay in an area away from children and the DSL is immediately notified. The DSL will speak with the parent / carer and if necessary, arrange for one of the child's or young person's emergency contacts to collect the child. If there is no one suitable to collect the child before the end of the session, children's social care will be informed.

If there is a risk of immediate harm to a child or staff, then staff must contact the police by dialing 999. The DSL is informed of the situation, and the concern is recorded on the day of the incident.

Responding to a disclosure by a child or young person

When responding to a disclosure from a child or young person, the aim is to get just enough information to take appropriate action.

- Listen calmly and carefully, allowing the child or young person time to express what they want to say.
- If you are not sure what the child or young person said or meant, you may prompt them further by saying 'tell me more or show me again.'
- If there are visible signs such as bruising, or injury, ask the child or young person how it happened if appropriate to do so.
- As soon as the child or young person is settled, report the information to the DSL.
- Record the disclosure using the child's or young person's exact words and your exact words.
- Record any visible signs such as bruising or injury on a body map.

Responding to information from a parent / carer or another adult

When responding to information from an adult the aim is to get just enough information to take appropriate action. It is important to explain to the person disclosing that you may have to share the information.

- Listen calmly and carefully, allowing the person time to express what they want to say.
- Check that you have understood the information correctly.
- If there is a sequence of events, check you have understood the order of events.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing to share the information.
- Inform the DSL as soon as possible.
- Record the information for the child or young person that the information refers to, keeping the information factual and clear.

Professional curiosity

- Staff should be 'professionally curious' if something doesn't feel right. Staff should avoid making assumptions and ask respectful questions to gain a deeper understanding of the situation. Concerns should be escalated as necessary.

Decision making

Once information has been shared with the DSL, they will decide what to do next. The DSL must seek the advice and guidance of the local Safeguarding Children Partnership if they are unclear of the next steps or it is a significant concern, likely to meet the threshold for referral. The decision and agreed actions must be recorded.

The DSL will use the local Safeguarding Children Partnership threshold/levels of need document to support their decision making.

Levels of need

Working Together to Safeguard Children requires local Safeguarding Children Partnerships to publish a threshold document which sets out the local criteria for action when a response is needed to a concern about a child. This document is widely known as the Levels of Need document. It is essential for DSLs to access their LSCP Levels of Need or Threshold document and understand the thresholds in their area. (Right help, Right Time – A continuum of need)

1. Universal: represents children with no identified additional needs and support can be offered through routine services such as GP or Health Visitor.
2. Early Help: low level concern requiring input from a minimum of one professional
3. Child in need wider professional involvement
4. Child in need of protection

Making a referral to Children's Social Care

The DSL takes responsibility for making a referral to Children's Social Care. This must be completed as soon as possible, and always on the day the disclosure or concern was raised. If the DSL is not on site, then the most senior person on site takes responsibility.

If the DSL is concerned about the immediate safety of a child or young person, for example if they are due to go home and it is not thought to be safe, then the police must be contacted immediately and then Children's Social Care.

Escalating a concern

Where a DSL's assessment of the risk to the child or young person differs from that of Children's Social Care and they remain concerned about the safety of a child, they must escalate the concern following local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.

A concern may be escalated where it is believed that:

- The local authority has not responded appropriately to a safeguarding referral to safeguard a child or young person.
- There are recurrent concerns about a child or young person, and there is an on-going inappropriate/insufficient response from the local authority.
- A child protection plan, child in need plan or social work assessment is not of sufficient quality to enable a child or young person to be safeguarded.
- Agreed actions to protect a child or young person have not happened, or have not happened within a reasonable timeframe, such as a parenting assessment or a risk assessment of a new partner with an offending history of violence.
- There is a concern about the quality, frequency, or process of safeguarding meetings, such as core groups or child in need meetings.

Professional disagreement

- If a member of staff disagrees with a decision by the DSL not to make a referral to Children's Social Care, they must initially discuss and try to resolve it with them.
- If the member of staff is still in disagreement, then they should contact the local children's safeguarding team to seek further advice.
- All discussions and agreed actions must be recorded.

Children or young people on Child Protection or Child in Need Plans

When the parent/carer completes the registration for their child, we will ask if they have a social worker and if they are on a Child Protection or Child in Need Plan, which is recorded.

The DSL and the key person will work with the family to ensure appropriate support is put in place.

The DSL will contact the named social worker and provide updates and attend meetings as required, including submitting reports. Reports will be shared with parents / carers prior to the meeting.

Allegations against a member of staff

All allegations of harm, abuse and concerns raised about a member of staff will be acted immediately, ensuring that the child is safe whilst also giving support to the person who is the subject of the allegation. An allegation or concern about a member of staff may be reported by a child, member of staff, volunteer or member of the public. All allegations and concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL.

Identifying

An allegation against a member of staff, constitutes serious harm or abuse if they;

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

(Working Together to Safeguard Children)

Actions

Concerns are reported to the DSL who will then decide, whether the concerns meet the criteria for a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The concern must be reported to the LADO by the DSL on the day the concern was raised, and the DSL will agree with the next steps with the LADO. A copy of the referral and all actions must be recorded within one working day.

If the concern is about the DSL, then this must be reported to (insert name of senior person).

Notifying Ofsted

Where there is an allegation of harm or abuse as defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children, Ofsted must be notified as soon as possible but always within 14 days. The DSL will discuss the concern with the Designated Safeguard Office before the notification is made by the DSO.

Behaviours that may cause concerns

Staff are required to raise all concerns about a colleague's behaviour or actions with the DSL. A concern is one that can cause a sense of unease or leave staff with a sense of doubt surrounding the practice of another member of staff. These behaviours may breach the code of conduct but not meet the threshold for making a LADO referral.

Examples of l concerns could include:

- Being overfriendly with children, including the use of nicknames
- Showing favouritism towards children or family
- Making disparaging comments or laughing at a child
- Having contact with families outside of the setting which breaches the Code of Conduct.
- Carrying out actions which have the potential to cause others to become at risk of harm.
- Using inappropriate language in the workplace with potential to offend or intimidate others.
- Behaving in a way that has the potential to bring the setting into disrepute.

This list is not exhaustive. Any concern must be reported to the DSL and recorded.

Recording

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded. Concerns should be recorded by the person receiving the information. If the concern relates to more than one child or young person, then a record is completed for each child.

If a child protection or early help referral is completed, this is uploaded onto the individual's record. All records must be factual. Where someone's direct words are recorded, this must be indicated clearly using speech marks.

Full guidance on recording information is available in the record keeping procedures.

Whistleblowing

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing refers to the action someone takes to report wrongdoing in the workplace that impacts others such as the public or the staff team. Employees are protected by law for reporting concerns of a criminal, fraudulent or health & safety nature. This process differs from personal grievances which will be dealt in line with the Grievance Disputes Procedure.

The whistleblowing procedure must be followed if, poor or unsafe practice is observed such as:

- A criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed.
- A person who has failed is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject. This includes non-compliance with policies and procedures, breaches of EYFS and/or registration requirements.
- A miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- The health and safety of any individual have been, is being or is likely to be endangered.
- The working environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged; or,
- That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding clauses has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

If staff wish to raise or discuss any issues which might fall into the above categories, they should raise this issue with the DSL. Staff who are unable to raise the issue with their DSL should raise the issue with Heather Turnham or the Committee.

If an issue cannot be resolved and the member of staff believes a child remains at risk, the NSPCC have introduced a whistle- blowing helpline 0800 0280285 for professionals who believe that:

- their own or another employer will cover up the concern,
- they will be treated unfairly by their own employer for complaining,
- if they have already told their own employer and they haven't responded

NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 – 08:00 to
20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is:

help@nspcc.org.uk.

Alternatively, staff can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.

Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a provider: Complaints procedure - Ofsted - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Disclosure and Barring Service

All staff must obtain enhanced criminal record and barred list checks for every person living and/or working on the premises including volunteers (unless there is no access to the part of the premises when and where children are cared for) and/or they do not work on the part of the premises where the childcare takes place, or do not work there at times when children are present).

If a member of staff is dismissed because of a proven or strong likelihood of child abuse, inappropriate behaviour towards a child**,** or other behaviour that may indicate they are unsuitable to work with children such as drug or alcohol abuse, or other concerns raised during supervision when the staff suitability checks are done, the DSL will inform DBS as required.

Working with children or young people on a one-to-one basis

Working on a one-to-one basis out of sight and hearing with a child or young person is kept to a minimum due to the increased risk to children and members of staff. To work on a one-to-one basis, a risk assessment must be completed.

- A risk assessment is completed prior to any one-to-one working. The risk assessment must include how the individual needs of the child will be met, location and reason for working alone with the child. The completed risk assessment must be signed off by the setting manager
- There must be a reason for the one-to-one work.
- No member of staff should undertake lone working with a child without being aware of this procedure and a completed risk assessment.
- All one-to-one work is reviewed in supervision meetings, to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.
- Parental consent is sought for the one-to-one work to take place, and

professional boundaries of the work made clear to the parent / carer and to the child.

- A record of the work and the risk assessment is kept and stored securely.

Safeguarding reviews

An annual safeguarding audit will be completed by the DSL. This is to ensure that the setting is compliant with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Where there has been significant safeguarding concern, a formal review will be undertaken and reported to and reviewed by the DSL.