

**WISE OWLS CHILDCARE**  
**Safeguarding policy and procedure**

**Designated safeguarding officers on site are:**

We believe the welfare, safety and protection of each individual child is essential. Furthermore, we believe children have the right to be completely secure from both the fear and reality of abuse, and we are committed to protecting all the children in our care from harm.

Wise Owls safeguarding procedures comply with all relevant legislation and other guidance. We also have the 'Working together to safeguard children 2023' and refer to it as and when necessary. Wise Owls recognises its duty of care to safeguard children as detailed under the Children Acts' 1989 and 2004.

The policy and its procedures will be shared openly with staff and parents/carers. The setting will have a designated safeguarding officer who is in charge of ensuring that the most recent safeguarding legislation is in place and policies and procedures are followed. The Company is committed to reviewing its Safeguarding policy and procedures at regular intervals.

**Prevent Abuse by setting good practise**

- We will endeavour to ensure staff are never left alone with children and ensure staff are always in sight / heard
- Staff will never shout or raise a hand to a child
- Staff will never force a child to do something they do not want to do
- Rooms will be set out in a way that staff can observe children at all times
- All staff, including trainees and students will be given safeguarding training to gain a general awareness of known indicators and pre-disposing factors of abuse and knowledge of policies and procedures. This will include talking through their staff handbook and having a full induction. Appraisals are regularly carried out to ensure all issues are covered. Policies and procedure quizzes are included in every staff meeting, so the staff are able to have opportunities to discuss any queries they may have. We will ensure they know how to report any concerns, vigilant of their own behaviour. They will also be aware how to access training.
- We ensure the privacy of children when intimate care is being provided e.g. administering first aid, toilet training etc.
- We ensure all staffs safeguarding training is refreshed every 3 years.

**Recognising Child Abuse**

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways. All staff have had child protection training and are aware of putting the child's best interests first at all times. All staff will be vigilant to signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect and inform the manager if they are ever suspicious and keep a record of any evidence.

**Examples of these are-**

**Physical Abuse** – This involves hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, suffocating or any other physical harm. Deliberately causing a child's ill health also constitutes physical abuse.

**Sexual Abuse** – This involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetration or non-penetrative acts. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities or encouraging a child to behave in sexually inappropriate way also constitutes sexual abuse.

**Emotional Abuse** – Varying degrees of emotional abuse is present in virtually all child protection incidents, but can also constitute abuse in its own right. Emotional abuse involves persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or torture causing, or likely to cause, severe adverse effects on the emotional stability of a child. Such behaviour may involve conveying to a child they are worthless, unloved or inadequate, or making them feel unnecessarily frightened or vulnerable.

**Neglect**- Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional or psychological needs, such as is likely to have a severe impact on their health, development or emotional stability. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing for a child or failing to adequately protect them from physical harm or ill health. Neglect can also manifest itself in a failure to meet the basic emotional needs of a child.

**Female Genital Mutilation** - Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a term for procedures, which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. Wise Owls is committed to providing a secure environment for children, where they feel safe and are kept safe. All adults in our setting recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility irrespective of the role they undertake or whether their role has direct contact or responsibility for children or not.  
NSPCC FGM helpline 08000 283550

(Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003)

**Domestic Violence** – Children who witness domestic violence from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another tend to have low self-esteem and can experience increased levels of anxiety, anger and fear, aggressive and violent behaviours, including bullying, lack of conflict resolution skills, lack of empathy for others and poor peer relationships.

### **Breast Ironing**

Breast ironing, also known as breast flattening, is the pounding and massaging of a pubescent girl's breasts, using hard or heated objects, to try to make them stop developing or disappear. Signs to look for are: Unusual behaviour after an absence from school including depression, anxiety, aggression, becoming withdrawn. Some girls may ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear. Fear of changing for physical activities due to scars showing or bandages being visible.

### **County Lines**

This a form of abuse and is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns. Country line gangs are highly organised criminal networks. They use children and young people to maximise profits and distance. Young people do the most work and have the most risk. Dedicated mobile phone lines or deal lines are used to help facilitate county line drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned, because they are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police.

Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs, this may be a local dealer or drug user, or a dealer or drug user in another county.

Children as young as seven years old are groomed and coerced into trafficking drugs by criminal gangs

Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

- Running a line
- Going OT/out there
- Going country
- Going cunch

These all refer to going out of town to deliver drugs or money.

These are some signs to look out for:

- Are they always going missing from school or their home?
- Are they travelling alone to places far away from home?
- Do they suddenly have lots of money/lots of new clothes/new mobile phones?
- Secretive behaviour about their whereabouts
- Constant talk or praise about another young person

Ensure if you have concerns you follow usual process of reporting to the DSL and writing up notes. You can speak to the police by dialling 101 or if an emergency call 999 directly.

## **Faith Abuse**

Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a child's welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a child.

Any abuse that takes place against those who are branded (or labelled) either as a witch or as having been possessed by an evil spirit is unacceptable. Significant harm (including murder) can occur because of concerted efforts to 'excise' or 'deliver' evil from a child (or vulnerable adult).

## **Spotting the signs of child abuse and neglect**

To spot the signs of child abuse or neglect, look for changes in:

- **Appearance** – such as frequent unexplained injuries, consistently poor hygiene, matted hair, unexplained gifts, or a parent regularly collecting children from school when drunk
- **Behaviour** – such as demanding or aggressive behaviour, frequent lateness or absence from school, avoiding their own family, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being constantly tired
- **Communication** – such as sexual or aggressive language, self-harming, becoming secretive and reluctant to share information or being overly obedient

## **Tracking attendance**

Wise Owls has procedures in place for tracking children and staff's attendance and absences. The management team record when children and staff attend Wise Owls. The management team are responsible for monitoring suspicious absences. Registers are reviewed on a weekly basis. Any suspicious absences are recorded and dealt with accordingly.

## **Prevent Duty**

Staff will be alert to changes in a child's behaviour which could indicate they may be in need of help or protection. Staff will use their professional judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately. Staff will keep track and document any behaviour that may seem out of the ordinary. Any concerns will be voiced to the designated safeguarding officer who will report findings and complete a report of concern form and act on this.

(Counter terrorism and security act 2015)

## **Staff Support and Training**

Wise Owls is committed to providing training and support for their staff with respect to Child Protection. Therefore:

- All staff, students and volunteers are carefully recruited, have verified references and have full and up to date DBS Check.
- The Manager tests the employee's on our safeguarding procedures.
- All staff and volunteers are made aware of the Child Protection policy and made aware of its implications.
- All staff complete a safeguarding course when they join Wise Owls.
- All staff receive training in prevent duty and FGM
- All staff and volunteers receive regular training and supervision in Child Protection issues and are provided with any relevant information and guidance.
- All staff are aware of the main indicators of child abuse.
  
- All staff are aware of their statutory requirements in respect of the disclosure of discovery of child abuse and the procedure for doing so.
- The Company will take appropriate action in relation to the findings of any investigation into allegations of abuse, consistent with its duties to protect the safety of children and uphold fair processes for staff, students and volunteers.
- Any member of staff, a student or volunteers under investigation for the alleged abuse of a child, will be subject to the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

## **Unvetted Adults**

Staff will be supervised until a full enhanced clear DBS check is issued. Tradesmen on site will undertake a safeguarding check list before accessing the building. If on site where children are present they will need to be escorted at all times.

No unvetted adult will be given unsupervised access to the children. Any visitors to the setting will be accompanied at all times by a member of staff and be required to sign in.

## **Safe Care**

- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise the time when members of staff, students or volunteers are left alone with a child. If staff are alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open and another member of staff should be informed.
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff, student or volunteer, this will be recorded fully in the Incident Record Book.
- Staff will never carry out a personal task for children that they can do themselves. Where this is essential, staff will help a child whilst being accompanied by a colleague. Unless a child has a particular need, staff should not accompany children to the toilet. Staff are aware that this and similar activities could be misconstrued.
- Staff will be mindful 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. Any contact with the children for comfort/caring reasons will be for the necessary of caring for the child's needs alone.
- If a child would like a cuddle, to hold a staff members hand, to sit on a staff members lap etc. then we will comfort them as we believe comfort and re-assurance at our nurseries is necessary
- If a child need to be controlled due to their behaviour at the club staff will use the necessary actions to ensure the child, the other children and the staff are all safe.

- Staff are trained on what is appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to physical contact with children.
- All allegations made by a child against a member of staff will be fully recorded, including any actions taken, in the Incident Record Book. In the event of there being a witness to an incident, they should sign the records to confirm this.

### **Having a Safeguarding concern**

There is a 'report of concern' form at all settings which is completed if there is any safeguarding concern of a child/staff member. This form is to be completed within 24 hours of the concern and includes all factual details. The form is given to the designated safeguarding person who will carry out any necessary action. Should the details be reported to social services the designated safeguarding person will follow up the report within 3 days and then complete the outcome of this. All completed forms are to be sent to the office in an envelope and will be kept in a confidential file at the office.

### **Dealing with Allegations**

Wise Owls is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of Child Protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively. The Company will not carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. On discovering an allegation of abuse, the Designated Safeguarding officer will immediately refer the case to the local statutory child protection agencies including the local safeguarding children's board. The Director will also be notified of this.

Further to this, the following principles will govern any suspected or reported case of abuse:

- Where actual or suspected abuse comes to the attention of staff, they will report this to the designated safeguarding officer then the Manager and the Director at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgement and if they suspect abuse has, or is taking place, to report this.
- Full written records of all reported incidents will be produced and maintained. Information recorded will give full details of the alleged incident; details of all the parties involved; any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties; relevant dates, dates and locations and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff. The Club will demonstrate great care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse.
- The designated safeguarding officer will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidential.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against the Manager the designated safeguarding officer will inform the Director as soon as possible. The Director will assume responsibility for the situation or delegate this role to a senior member of staff.
- Staff will ensure that all concerns and allegations are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Any children involved in alleged incidents will be comforted and reassured.

In circumstances where a child makes an allegation or a disclosure, the member of staff concerned will:

1. Listen fully to all the child has to say.
2. Make no observable judgement and ask no leading questions
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.
6. Make full and detailed notes as soon as possible following the allegation or disclosure.

### **Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies**

If the designated safeguarding officer, Manager or Director has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been, or is in grave danger of being, subject to abuse, the following procedure will be activated:

- Contact will be made, at the earliest possible opportunity, with the local Multi-Agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and Early help hub (EHH)
- The designated safeguarding officer or Manager will communicate as much information about the allegation and relate incidents as is consistent with advice given by social services and police.
- At all times, the safety, protection and interests of the children concerned will take precedence. The Manager and staff will work with and support parents/carers as far as they are legally able.
- The company will assist the social services and the police, as far as it is able, during any investigation of abuse or neglect. This will include disclosing written and verbal information and evidence.
- OFSTED will be informed of any allegations of abuse against a member of staff, student or volunteer, or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises or during a visit or outing.

## Single Point of Access (SPA) and RBWM Safeguarding Partnership

The Single Point of Access (SPA) (formerly known as MASH - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and Early Help Hub (EHH) is the single point of contact for all safeguarding and wellbeing concerns regarding children and young people in The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM).

It does this by:

- Acting as a “front door” to manage all safeguarding referrals including the undertaking of Child Protection investigations where required,
- Acting as a “front door” to Early Help Hub,

The SPA and Early Help Hub are designed to meet the two key principles of effective safeguarding as defined by Working Together 2015:

- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- A child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

If you consider a child is in immediate danger, phone police emergency number on 999.

Contact SPA – phone 01628 683150 or 01344 786543

Email: [MASH@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:MASH@achievingforchildren.org.uk)

Address: Town Hall, St.Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF.

### **What to do if you are concerned about the behaviour of a staff member towards a child**

As a first step, you should raise concerns with the Manager or Designated safeguarding officer, who should then relay all information to the Business Manager/Director. If the allegation relates to the named person for managing allegations, then you must contact the LADO directly for advice. If an immediate risk then the police must be contacted on 999.

Steps to dealing with an allegation against a member of staff / volunteer where the LADO threshold has been met

1. Written record of incident including dates, times, location of incident (s), any witnesses and any other details necessary to the allegation.
2. The Designated safeguarding officer / Manager / Director will discuss the next steps.
3. The LADO will be contacted within 1 working day. Referral should not be delayed in order to obtain more information.

4. Where necessary the LADO will make a referral to Children's Social Care if this has not already taken place or police will be contacted
5. The accused member of staff / volunteer is informed of the allegation made against them. Unless there is a risk that sharing the information will undermine or impede a subsequent investigation, this should be done as soon as possible.
6. An investigation into the allegation will be conducted by the designated safeguarding officer / Manager / Director.
7. The company's disciplinary procedure may need to be followed (Outlined in Employee Handbook)
8. The parents / carers of the child will be informed provided provision of information and advice does not impede the enquiry, disciplinary or investigative processes (may need to be told immediately if e.g. a child required medical treatment)
9. The outcome of the internal investigations will be reported to LADO and parents.

Throughout the whole process notes will be taken. All parties will work together to ensure all of the allegations are dealt with appropriately. The LADO will support Wise Owls through investigations, actions and outcomes.

Internal procedures for dealing with an allegation whereby the LADO threshold has not been met. However, if in doubt about whether the allegation requires LADO always call for advice.

1. Written record of incident including dates, times, location of incident (s), any witnesses and any other details necessary to the allegation.
2. The Designated safeguarding officer / Manager / Director will discuss the next steps.
3. The accused member of staff / volunteer is informed of the allegation made against them.
4. An investigation into the allegation will be conducted by the designated safeguarding officer / Manager / Director.
5. Decision will be made and clear records kept on file with the outcome and reasons for the decision
6. Further work and support will be undertaken with the adult who was under investigation

### **Support to Parents/Carers**

- The safety of the child at risk is of paramount importance. The parents / carers of the child will be informed provided provision of information and advice does not impede the enquiry, disciplinary or investigative processes (may need to be told immediately if e.g. a child required medical treatment)
- Helped to understand the process involved and kept informed about the progress of the case
- Told the outcome where there is no criminal prosecution (including the outcome of any disciplinary process except the deliberation/information taking into account in a hearing)

## **Whistle Blowing Policy**

### **What is whistle blowing?**

Whistle blowing encourages and enables staff to raise serious concerns within the clubs, rather than overlooking a problem. Staff have a duty of care to the children, any concerns must be voiced or they are putting the children at risk and could potentially face disciplinary hearing on failure to report any concerns.

### **Our commitment**

Wise Owls Club is committed to ensuring the highest standards of openness and accountability. In line with that commitment we expect staff, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the club's operation to come forward and voice these concerns. Policies and procedures must be followed by all staff at all times

and remain professional. Any concerns must be reported in the first instant, if the concern is their manager then the business manager/director will be contacted.

### **Who does the policy apply too?**

The policy applies to all employee's, permanent and temporary, volunteers and work experience students.

### **The aims of the policy**

- To encourage staff to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice.
- To provide avenues for staff to raise concerns in confidence and receive feedback on any action taken
- To ensure you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them if you are not satisfied
- To reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if you have reasonable belief that you have made a disclosure in good faith

### **What types of concerns are covered?**

- Behaviour which has harmed, or may harm a child
- Where there is a possibility that a member of staff has committed a criminal offence against a child that has not been disclosed
- Behaviour towards a child or children in a way that makes them unsuitable to work with children
- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other staff
- Damage to the environment
- Actions which are unprofessional, inappropriate or conflict with a general understanding of what is right and wrong

### **Safeguards and victimisation**

Wise Owls Childcare recognises that the decision to report a concern can be difficult one to make. If what the staff member is saying is true, there will be nothing to fear because it is a duty of care to the employer and children.

### **Confidentiality**

All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the staff members identity if they so wish. At the appropriate time, however the staff member may need to come forward as a witness. The policy encourages staff members to put their name to the concern wherever possible. Please note that:

- Staff must disclose the information in good faith
- Staff must believe it to be substantially true, a child is right until proven wrong
- Staff must not act maliciously or make false allegations
- Staff must not seek any personal gain

### **How to raise a concern**

As a first step, you should raise concerns with the Manager, who should then relay all information to the Business Manager and Director. In all cases that fits the criteria above then the LADO and MASH hub will be contacted for advice and guidance. Notes will be taken throughout the whole process. All parties will work together to ensure all the allegations are dealt with appropriately.

Updated January 2024



