Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Policy Statement

At Little Acorns we aim to create a happy and secure environment in which children feel safe at all times and we want parents to feel confident that when they leave their child, that they are in safe hands. The welfare of the child is paramount and we will support and help all children and families attending Little Acorns regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion.

Everyone involved with Little Acorns either as a volunteer or member of staff, have a duty to prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect of all children with whom they come into contact and to keep these children safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. The following Policy explains how we plan to keep children safe and details the procedures that will be followed should any concerns arise.

Any safeguarding or child protection concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Pat Hughes, Little Acorns Pre-School, Irene Avenue, Lancing, BN15 9NZ Mobile: 07770884860 Email: littleacorns00@hotmail.co.uk

Legal Framework and Putting the Principles into Practice:
The Children's Act 1989, 2006
The Protection of Children Act, 1999
The Human Rights Act, 1998 Equality Act, 2010
The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2026
Counter Terrorism and Security Act, 2015
Recruiting & Retaining your Staff Team - West Sussex Early Years & Childcare Service, 2006
How to Develop Child Protection Policies & Procedures – Action in Rural Sussex, May 2003
Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures – West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership https://www.sussexsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/ including Bruising/Injuries in Children who are Not Independently Mobile - April 2021
What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (advice for practitioners), 2015
Prevent Duty Guidance – HM Government, 2023
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026)
Online Safety Act (2023)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures

Our aim is to protect children from harm, and as such, we should be alert to harmful behaviour by other people in the child's life, which includes children, young people or adults in their lives being vulnerable to or affected by the ideological causes of terrorism which may manifest itself in radicalisation or extremism. Our protective duty applies to students, volunteers or apprentices under the age of 18 as well as the children in our care. Our safeguarding role extends to everyone the Pre-School is in contact with, whether staff, students, volunteers, children, parents/carers or their wider families.

Little Acorns adheres to the four main categories of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect, as described in the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. https://www.sussexsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/ Any suspicion or allegation of abuse, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) will be taken seriously and the following guidelines should be used.

DO
listen carefully and let the child give an uninterrupted account
use appropriate body language
be calm and say you are sorry this has happened to them
treat allegations seriously
tell the child they are right to tell you
reassure them that they are not to blame
be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why
tell the child what you are doing and when and keep them up to date with what is happening
write down everything said and what was done - keep an accurate record
seek medical attention if necessary
inform parents/carers unless it will put the child at risk of harm
take further action – you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse, so tell your nominated person immediately

DON'T
rush out of the room to get someone else to listen
make promises you can't keep
ask leading questions
cast doubt on what the child has told you
don't interrupt or change the subject
say anything that makes the child feel responsible for the abuse
make assumptions about how the child feels
do nothing – make sure you tell the nominated child protection representative immediately. They will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.
If abuse, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or being vulnerable to or affected by radicalisation or extremism is suspected, we will follow the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures
https://www.sussexsafeguardingchildrenprocedures.co.uk/

Any information, along with details of any action taken in the case of suspected abuse, will be recorded in a Record of Concern, which will be kept secure, accessible only by the nominated child protection representative and/or manager of the Pre-school. See also: Confidentiality Policy

The following organisations and services can help if there are safeguarding concerns:
Integrated Front Door (IFD) Tel. 01403 229900 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday
West Sussex Out of Hours Service Tel. 0330 222 6664
Emergency Safeguarding Concerns: only if above lines are busy Tel. 07711 769657 - no texts Email: wschildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000
Childline (for children) 0800 1111
Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance 020 7713 0569 OFSTED 0300 123 1231

Bruising or Injuries in Children who are Not Independently Mobile
Following guidance from West Sussex, staff are obliged to report any observed bruise or unexplained skin mark, burn, oral or eye injury in children under the age of six months, or who are not independently mobile. They should seek an explanation and record the information accurately, using a body map, as necessary and report to the DSL who should immediately report it to the Integrated Front Door (IFD - Tel. 01403 229900), or clearly record the reason why the incident is not being reported e.g. if the incident which caused the mark is observed, in which case it should be recorded in the accident or incident book and a note made, in case another professional refers the mark at a later date.

Although the children attending Little Acorns are usually independently mobile, they may have a young sibling who this guidance would be relevant to, who may be seen at drop off or pick up time. Similarly, a childminder dropping off or picking up a child may have young children in their care who the guidance would be relevant to.

Radicalisation or Extremism Concerns
At L~~ittle Acorns we aim to promot~~e the British Values of Democracy, Rule of Law, Individual Liberty and Mutual Respect and Tolerance, to help keep children safe, promote their welfare and to counter extremism, whether violent or non-violent.
Children (and adults) at risk may have low self-esteem or be suffering from bullying.
Signs to look out for:
• extreme views which they are unwilling or unable to discuss
• sudden disrespectful attitude towards other

• change in behaviour
• increased levels of anger
• talking as if from a scripted speec
• isolation from friends and family
• increased secretiveness, especially around internet use

Any concerns should be reported to Integrated Front Door (IFD).

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Emergency Safeguarding Concerns: only if above lines are busy Tel. 07711 769657
Email: wschildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

We may also want to contact the Police on 101 or if there is immediate danger or concern ring 999. The anti-terrorist hotline can be contacted on 0800 789 321.

To raise concerns about extremism in schools or children's services, we can also contact: Department for Education Helpline Tel. 0370 000 2288 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5pm) or make an online referral: https://report-extremism.education.gov.uk/ https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-referral-to-prevent

Information and resources for education settings can be obtained from Education Against Hate https://www.educateagainsthate.com/

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
FGM is a procedure which deliberately cuts, injures or changes the female genitals, for cultural, religious, or social reasons and is illegal in the UK. It is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15. Signs to look out for:
• An extended holiday or lengthy absence from school
• A female relative has undergone FGM
• A friend or relative "cutter" has come from abroad
• A special occasion or ceremony where the girl "becomes a woman"
• Child acting differently after an absence
• Spending longer in the toilet
• Has difficulty standing, walking, or sitting
• Is in severe or constant pain
• Difficulty urinating or is incontinent
• Is quiet, anxious, or depressed
• Reluctant to go to doctor's or have routine medical examinations

Any concerns regarding FGM must be reported to IFD immediately.
Integrated Front Door (IFD) Tel. 01403 229900 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday
West Sussex Out of Hours Service Tel. 0330 222 6664
Emergency Safeguarding Concerns: only if above lines are busy Tel. 07711 769657
Email: wschildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk National FGM Centre
http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk – information and advice about FGM and also Child Abuse linked to Faith or Belief (CALFB) including witchcraft.

Non-Attendance at Pre-School
We expect parents or carers to inform us if their child is going to be absent from Pre-School for any reason. Where a child does not attend Pre-School and no contact has been made to let the Pre-School know why, a member of staff will contact the family by phone or text to check if the child is well and to offer support, if needed. For frequent absences, records of any contact made will be kept and monitored. See our Admissions and Attendance Policy for more details.

Long Term Closure e.g. for a Health Pandemic
Even if the Pre-School is closed, staff still have a safeguarding duty and must report any concerns they have that may arise from a telephone call, email, visit or web chat, to one of the designated staff members as soon as possible.

Families that may be considered vulnerable will be contacted on a regular basis, by telephone, email, text, visit, web chat (as appropriate) and records kept of any contact made.

See also: Emergency and Temporary Closure Policy

Staff Recruitment, Training and Practice
Any member of staff recruited by Little Acorns will be required to undergo the following selection and vetting procedures:
• completion of a standard application form.
• produce evidence of their identity, including photographic evidence, where possible
• be interviewed by at least two people.
• provide a minimum of two references, including from their most recent employer, which will be followed up and the employee will not able to work until at least two satisfactory references have been received.
• identification of reasons for gaps in employment or inconsistencies.
• submit to an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
• no unsupervised contact with children until these checks, including the references have been received and reviewed.
• undergo a minimum 3 month probationary period, which will include a comprehensive induction and training period.

Staff must disclose any information which may affect their suitability to work with children including, but not limited to, arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings (whether received before or during their employment at the setting).

All staff must complete a Safeguarding and Child Protection Course which includes the content listed in Annex C of the EYFS (2025), either face to face, or online and update it at least every two years. This training enables staff to recognise and respond appropriately to suspicions of abuse or other safeguarding concerns and is open to volunteers as well as paid members of staff. The DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) must also update their Local Authority DSL training every two years, along with keeping their Safeguarding and Child Protection knowledge, including the Prevent Duty and knowledge of local procedures up to date, taking into account any advice or training offered through the local safeguarding partnership. Annual refresher training for all staff should take place and this may be done online, face to face or in house. At Little Acorns, this takes the form of discussing a safeguarding scenario at each staff meeting, to ensure that all staff know what action to take in a particular situation and why and feel confident to put this Policy into practice.

Regular staff meetings and supervision sessions provide an opportunity for staff to discuss any difficulties or concerns they have and safeguarding is a fixed agenda item at staff meetings. Staff are also supported by regular monitoring, supervision and appraisals. Opportunities to undertake further training are available and the Pre-School budget includes an allocation towards training costs.

Volunteers, are also required to hold an enhanced disclosure from the DBS and will not be allowed to work with children until this has been received and reviewed. All staff,

and volunteers are required to sign and date a Code of Conduct, a copy of which is on display on our noticeboard.

Terminology

Using the correct terminology for body parts is key to ensuring that safeguarding concerns are not missed, therefore staff will use appropriate words such as penis and vagina, when necessary and in context e.g. if a child asks what these body parts are called when looking at dolls. It is also important for parents to let us know if they or their child use different words to describe their child's private parts e.g. willy, privates etc and this information can be collected on the initial "All About M form" form. As a minimum, it is good practice to refer to these body parts as "privates" rather than giving them pet names that may cause confusion to people unfamiliar with which body parts the pet names are referring to.

Physical Contact

It is important that staff (including volunteers) avoid putting themselves in situations which could lead to allegations being made against them. For their own protection, but mainly as good practice and good manners, staff and/or helpers are advised that children should initiate physical contact with them, although this will not apply where a child needs to be removed from a situation threatening their own or others' safety. Should this happen, it will be recorded in an incident book and the parents/carers informed at the end of the session.

Nappy/Clothes Changing

When changing nappies or clothing, it would be appropriate for the member of staff doing the changing, to give warning that it is going to happen and to gain some sort of consent from the child such as encouraging them to carry the clean nappy or clothes to the changing area or (if appropriate), asking if they want to be changed standing up or lying down; on the changing unit or in the toilet etc. This gives the child some control over the experience and encourages them to understand that their body is their own and that they do have some choice over their personal care.

When changing a child, staff should try and ensure that the child has some privacy from others in the setting, balancing the need for privacy and safeguarding themselves. Staff should ensure that they record the details on the changing record sheet / Care Diary of who they have changed, why, the date and time, and, if changing clothing whether they used Pre-School or the child's own clothing.

Safer Sleeping

If a child falls asleep, we will ensure they are moved to the designated sleeping area, where the child will be kept within sight and hearing of a member of staff and checked a minimum of every 10 minutes.

Technology- Mobile Phones, Cameras, Watches, Glasses and Social Media

All staff, students and volunteers must ensure that mobile phones are left with their personal belongings and not kept on their person, during Pre-School sessions. Only the Pre-School iPads/phone should be used for taking photographs of the children as evidence of their learning and development and only once we have obtained parental

consent. Any photos containing identifiable images of children on the iPad or phone should not be uploaded to social media or shared in any way, except with the child's parents/carers and only once we have received consent. (See: Social Media Policy)

Staff, students or volunteers wearing smart watches should put them on airplane mode during working hours and watches or smart glasses with cameras capable of taking photographs should not be worn at Pre-School during working hours.

Staff, students and volunteers should not put identifiable comments about the setting, the children, staff or parents/carers on any web sites or social networking sites.

The relationships between staff, both paid and voluntary, parents, visitors and children, should be based on mutual respect and everyone is expected to contribute to and take responsibility for ensuring a positive working environment and to conduct themselves accordingly.

See also: Staff and Employment Policy, Staff Development Policy, Social Media Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy

Operation Encompass

Little Acorns is part of Operation Encompass which is a national scheme operating jointly between educational settings and police forces. It is the reporting to educational settings, prior to the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has experienced domestic abuse, so that the setting can provide the best support for that child.

Online Safety

At Little Acorns, we recognise the value of children being able to go online to find out information and to engage in activities which contribute to their learning, creativity and understanding of the world. This active learning enhances the knowledge and play taking place at home and in the Pre-School, but must be balanced with the need to safeguard the children and adults in our care and this includes keeping them safe online.

Each device has its own anti-virus protection installed. Our laptop and iPads are all password protected and will be set to the children's login each day, which limits what they are able to access independently. We have installed and bookmarked a number of websites and games aimed specifically at Under 5's, which we feel will enhance their skills, knowledge and understanding. Where possible, staff will sit with children whilst they are using the computer or tablet, to scaffold their learning and to talk about what they are doing, seeing or finding out. If a child wants to go online to access a resource or research some information, they will need to do so alongside an adult, who will ensure that this is done safely and will use a child friendly search engine such as "Safe Search" If necessary, filtering software can be purchased and installed on each device.

If an adult wishes to share an online story or resource with the children, they must check it is suitable before it is shared.

Staff will also talk to the children about being safe online, by encouraging children to only go online with a grown up; to be kind online, just as they would in person; to keep

information about themselves private and to tell an adult if they see or hear something that makes them sad, upset or uncomfortable. We will also utilise resources such as the NSPCC's Technosaurus https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for parents/techosaurus/ and Childnet's Digiduck and Smartie the Penguin stories to help get these online safety messages across https://www.childnet.com/resources?for=3-7-years

If inappropriate content does find its way through the protections in place, staff should immediately close it down and report it to the designated safeguarding lead, who will make a note and try to block the site being accessed and if necessary, report it to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/) and inform the child's parents about what has happened.
The adult logins on our devices ensures that staff are able to access work emails, training and documents but any inappropriate content should still be logged and reported if necessary.

Mobile Phones and Email
Only the Pre-School mobile should be accessible during session times and should only be used by staff to access work emails/texts and occasionally to take photos of the setting which are added to our Facebook group. Occasionally it is used to take photos of children, e.g. to send to parents on What's App to reassure them that their child is ok. Any photos taken will be deleted from the phone once the child has left the setting. Any group photos will be emailed to be stored in password protected files on the computer or in cloud storage.

Staff will not access their own phones or check personal emails during session times, unless there is an emergency situation, in which case permission must be sought from the Manager/Deputy to do so, away from the children.

Managing Time Spent Online
The World Health Organisation recommend that over 2's should only have 1 hour of screen time a day, although less is better. At Pre-School, children are usually limited to 10 minutes sedentary screen time, which is enforced by using a sand timer so that children know when the sand has run out, they need to choose another activity to engage in. It also means that every child will have the opportunity to use the iPad or computer should they wish to and that it is not hogged by just one child during the session. However, it is not the quantity of screen time, but the quality of screen time that is most important.

We will ensure all children and their families are made aware of how to keep safe online. When completing initial getting to know you paperwork, families are asked if their child has online access at all and whether they would like any further information about keeping safe online. We have links to online safety information and regularly share with parents/carers.

We will remind parents to think about what devices the children are accessing, such as parents' own phones, and of the need to set parental controls on these devices too. The best way to keep children safe online is to share in what they are doing, seeing or watching and to talk about it openly so that any concerns are aired straight away, and it becomes an embedded topic of conversation.

Dealing with an Allegation of Abuse against a Member of Staff

All adults at Little Acorns are expected to set an example to the children in their care and to conduct appropriate relationships with them. The following behaviours specifically should not be allowed: sexual conduct and exclusive or secretive relationships. If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff, including the Manager, whether the incident occurred within the setting or not, the following procedure from the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual will be followed: https://www.westsussexscp.org.uk/professionals/professional-disagreements-and concerns/ladoinformation

1: The designated person e.g. Manager/Deputy of the setting will gather factual information in regards to the incident and ensure any evidence is preserved. It is a neutral process, not an investigation and any information obtained, discussions held and decisions made, including the reasons for them should be recorded.

2: The designated person will immediately, or within one working day, contact the West Sussex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) by completing the online referral form https://socialcareportal.westsussex.gov.uk/s4s/FormDetails/FillForm?formId=445 and follow their advice and instructions and not carry out any investigation until the LADO has confirmed that this can be done.

3: Continue to gather information about the facts of the case e.g. checking if there is any evidence and taking statements from witnesses.

4: Carry out a risk assessment.

5: If appropriate, notify the police immediately or within one working day.

The designated person (usually the Manager) should inform the member of staff concerned, as soon as possible, that an allegation has been made; the nature of the allegation (if not subject to restrictions); advise them to contact their union or professional organisation as appropriate; inform them about how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcomes such as disciplinary procedures, dismissal and referral to the DBS and Ofsted.

Some situations may require the member of staff to not work with specific children, some children or any children. Following a risk assessment, the member of staff may be redeployed so that the member of staff does not come into contact with one or more children; refrained (agreeing that the member of staff will not work with children during the investigation) or suspended. The latter two options should only be used if there is cause to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm and the reasons and justification for this decision should be recorded and the member of staff informed.

The accused member of staff should be treated fairly and honestly, kept up to date with the progress and outcomes of any investigation and, if suspended, the member of staff should be kept up to date about events in the workplace.

OFSTED will be informed within 14 days of any allegations made against a member of staff or volunteer and the action taken to deal with it. Tel. 0300 123 1231.
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-childcare-incident
Once an internal investigation has been sanctioned by the LADO, the designated person will collect all the evidence and assess the outcome as being one of the following:

Substantiated – an allegation supported or established by evidence or proof;
Unsubstantiated – there is insufficient identifiable evidence to prove or disprove the allegation. The term does not imply guilt or innocence;
Unfounded – there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made. It might also indicate that the person making the allegation misinterpreted the incident or was mistaken about what they saw or may not have been aware of all the circumstances;
False – there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation;
Malicious – there is clear evidence to prove there has been a deliberate act to deceive and the allegation is entirely false.

In any outcome other than that where the allegation is substantiated, the worker should be re-instated to the setting.

If evidence is found to substantiate the allegation the worker should be dismissed and the West Sussex Early Years Directorate, Ofsted and the Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) informed.

Only cases in which an allegation was proven to be substantiated should be included in employer references.

Whistleblowing
A~~ll staff, stud~~ents and volunteers should feel confident to report any safeguarding concerns they have about a colleague, knowing that their concerns will be taken seriously, following the above procedure. Any concerns should be reported as soon as possible directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) unless this is the person whom the concern is about, in which case it can be reported directly to the Manager who will follow the above procedure.

NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line Tel. 0800 028 0285 offers free advice and support to professionals who are concerned about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation. Open Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm and weekends 9am – 6pm.

Safeguarding Children being Collected and Parental Responsibility
When a child first starts at the setting, the parent/carer will fill in a form listing who is allowed to collect their child and who has Parental Responsibility for them. Staff will not allow a child to leave with someone who is not named on this list unless they have had consent from a parent/carer. This consent may be the parent/carer informing us in person when dropping their child off, by letter, text or "What's App" message or over the telephone.
Every child will be issued with a password, which the parent/carer may wish to use at collection time or will be asked to pass on to an emergency contact as a way of identifying themselves at collection time. This password should only be used once and

will then be changed. It is the responsibility of the DSL to ensure they are kept updated. All staff are made aware of the location of the passwords; a secure area, accessed only by staff.

Daily or emergency information about changes in collection for a child, are noted on a Parent/Carer form, to ensure all staff are aware. If it is a permanent change, the parent/carer must change the permitted adults section on their child's form, which is located in the Parental Responsibility folder. If staff have any doubts about who is collecting a child, a telephone call to the parent/carer should be made, confirming collection details, before the child is allowed to leave.

At collection time, a register is completed, to mark off when each child has been collected, with members of staff located on the front door and main gate, greeting parents and carers and identifying any unknown adults. Parents and carers are allowed to come inside to collect their child, but if this is difficult, a member of staff can bring the child to the door to be collected, or in exceptional circumstances by prior arrangement with the Manager. Parents/carers are requested not to be on their phones when dropping off or collecting their child and if they are, will be asked to wait outside until they have finished their call.

As stated on the Registration Form, we cannot restrict access to any parent with Parental Responsibility unless a formal Court Order is in place and we have a copy of it on file. If the parent is unknown to us, we would need verification of their parental responsibility, before letting the child leave with them.

If staff have any safeguarding concerns over letting a child leave with a parent/carer who, for example, may be under the influence of alcohol/drugs, they should (if possible) let the DSL know of the situation, try to persuade the parent to let us call an alternative contact, but if the parent insists on taking their child, they should be informed that the Police will be contacted as we believe the child is at immediate risk of potential harm and the member of staff (or another staff member) should contact the Police on 999. This includes situations where the parent may be planning to drive whilst under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

Escalation Policy
If ~~a staff memb~~er feels that their concerns are not being dealt with adequately, they can speak to one of the Deputies. If they still feel the situation warrants further action, they can take their concern to OFSTED (contact details below).

If as a setting, the DSL feels that West Sussex are not acting appropriately to the concerns reported, they can follow the West Sussex Escalation Policy, a copy of which is held with this Policy. http://www.westsussexscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WSSCB-Escalation-Policy-draft V5-November-2018-FINAL-PDF.
Complaints
Any complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. We believe that most complaints are made constructively and can be sorted out at an early stage.

Complaints may be made verbally, in writing or by email. All written and emailed complaints will be fully investigated, and an account of the findings given within 28

days. The complainant will be kept informed about any action taken and may request this in writing or by email.

If the complainant is not satisfied with how the Pre-School has dealt with the complaint, they may wish to contact Ofsted for further information and advice: OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) Tel. 0300 123 1231 Email:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk www.ofsted.gov.uk
For full details, please also see our Complaints Policy and Procedure

Parents/carers are informed of our safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures through information in the Welcome Pack, which they are given prior to their child starting Pre-School. All policies are available to view on our website and a paper version is available to look at whenever the setting is open and copies can be provided on request.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, alongside all other policies.