

Safeguarding children and Child Protection policy

Designated safeguarding lead is Claire Bransby

Deputy designated safeguarding lead is Siouxsie Holloway and Zoe Munford

Introduction

At Playhouse Pre-School, we believe that every child has the right to be safe, protected from harm and supported to develop and thrive.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, volunteers, students and other adults working at or visiting the setting have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We work in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, current Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) procedures and other relevant statutory guidance.

We recognise that safeguarding includes protecting children from abuse and neglect, preventing impairment of their health or development, ensuring they grow up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The safety and welfare of children is our first priority.

Aims

We aim to:

- protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of harm;
- provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment;
- ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities;
- recognise and respond promptly to concerns about a child's welfare;
- listen to children and take their wishes and feelings seriously in an age-appropriate way;
- work appropriately and openly with parents and carers;
- work effectively with children's social care, the police, health professionals and other agencies;
- identify children and families who may benefit from early help and support;
- maintain accurate, secure and confidential safeguarding records;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and understand the procedures to follow; and
- promote a culture in which safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and reported without delay.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Claire Bransby.

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Siouxsie Holloway and Zoe Munford.

When the setting is open, the DSL or an appropriately trained DDSL will be available or contactable so that safeguarding concerns can be acted upon without delay.

The DSL will:

- take responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the setting;
- provide advice and support to staff;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded accurately and securely;
- make referrals to children's social care, the police or other agencies where appropriate;
- liaise with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and other relevant agencies;
- ensure safeguarding information is shared appropriately;
- support staff to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns;
- ensure safeguarding policies and procedures remain current;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates; and
- maintain appropriate safeguarding records.

The DSL will complete safeguarding training at least every two years and will keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

If the DSL is unavailable, the DDSL will take appropriate action. Safeguarding action must not be delayed because a particular member of staff is unavailable.

Culture of Safeguarding

Playhouse Pre-School promotes an open and supportive safeguarding culture.

All staff and volunteers are expected to:

- understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- report concerns immediately;
- maintain professional boundaries;
- follow the setting's policies and procedures;
- challenge unsafe or inappropriate practice;
- never ignore or dismiss a concern;
- listen to children and take their communication seriously; and
- seek advice when they are unsure about a safeguarding matter.

Staff are encouraged to speak openly with the Manager, DSL or DDSL about any concern regarding a child, colleague, volunteer or visitor.

Failure to report a safeguarding concern may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Safer Recruitment

Playhouse Pre-School follows safer recruitment procedures to ensure that adults working with children are suitable to do so.

This includes:

- appropriate application and recruitment procedures;
- checking employment history and investigating unexplained gaps where appropriate;
- obtaining suitable references;
- carrying out the required Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;
- checking staff suitability and disqualification requirements where applicable;

- verifying qualifications where required;
- ensuring staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities; and
- providing appropriate induction and safeguarding training.

Volunteers, students and visitors will not be given unsupervised access to children unless appropriate checks and arrangements are in place.

Visitors and Security

Playhouse has procedures to control access to the setting and to prevent unauthorised people from having access to children.

- Visitors are required to sign in and follow the setting's visitor procedures.
- Visitors will normally be accompanied while on the premises.
- Staff will be aware of visitors and other people using the premises.
- Children will not be allowed to leave the premises unsupervised.
- Any concerns about an unknown or unauthorised person will be reported immediately to the Manager/DSL and, where necessary, the police.

Recognising Safeguarding Concerns

Abuse and neglect can take many forms, including:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- exploitation;
- online harm;
- discriminatory or hateful abuse;
- harmful or inappropriate behaviour towards children; and
- other circumstances that may place a child at risk of harm.

Concerns may be identified through a child's words, behaviour, appearance, play, development, relationships or changes in their usual presentation.

Staff should remain alert to concerns involving babies and younger children who may communicate distress or experiences of harm through behaviour rather than words.

Staff must not assume that a child's additional needs, communication difficulties, disability or developmental stage explain away a change in behaviour or presentation.

Any concern must be reported to the DSL or DDSL without delay.

Responding to a Disclosure

If a child makes a disclosure or says something that causes concern, staff will:

- listen calmly and carefully;
- allow the child to speak in their own words;
- take the child seriously;
- avoid leading or investigative questions;
- use only necessary open questions to clarify what the child has said;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking to an adult;

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- not promise to keep the information secret;
- explain that the information may need to be shared to keep them safe;
- report the concern to the DSL/DDSL immediately; and
- make an accurate written record as soon as possible.

Records should include the date and time, the child's words as accurately as possible, what was observed, who was present and who the concern was reported to.

Records must be factual, signed and dated and stored securely.

Safeguarding Referrals

The DSL is responsible for making safeguarding referrals where appropriate.

Where there is a concern that a child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm, the DSL will follow current Hertfordshire safeguarding procedures and make a referral to Hertfordshire Children's Services where appropriate.

If a child is in immediate danger, or a crime is being committed, the police will be contacted by calling 999.

Hertfordshire Children's Services: 0300 123 4043

Current Hertfordshire safeguarding procedures and contact details will be checked regularly.

If the DSL is unavailable, staff must take appropriate action and seek advice from Children's Services or the police where necessary.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding information will be shared appropriately and securely with those who need to know in order to protect a child or promote their welfare.

Playhouse will follow current information-sharing legislation and guidance, including the Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People statutory guidance.

Information may be shared without consent where there is a lawful basis to do so, including where sharing is necessary to safeguard a child.

Staff will:

- only share information that is relevant and necessary;
- share information with appropriate people or agencies;
- keep safeguarding information secure;
- maintain confidentiality; and
- record significant decisions about information sharing where appropriate.

The welfare and safety of the child will remain the primary consideration.

Informing Parents and Carers

Parents/carers will normally be informed when a safeguarding concern is raised about their child.

However, parents/carers will not be informed where doing so could:

- place the child or another person at increased risk of harm;
- prejudice a police investigation;
- interfere with safeguarding enquiries; or
- otherwise be contrary to the child's welfare.

The DSL will seek advice from Children's Services or the police where appropriate before informing parents/carers.

Early Help

Playhouse recognises that some children and families may benefit from additional help before concerns reach the level requiring statutory intervention.

Staff will remain alert to signs that a child or family may need additional support and will discuss concerns with the DSL.

Where appropriate, the setting will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals to provide or access early help.

The setting will work cooperatively with local services and will follow current Hertfordshire procedures.

Allegations or Concerns About Adults

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, volunteer, student or other person working with children:

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

The setting will follow current Hertfordshire safeguarding and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedures.

The setting will not carry out an investigation that could interfere with safeguarding, disciplinary or criminal enquiries.

The setting will cooperate fully with the LADO, Children's Services, police and other relevant agencies.

All allegations will be recorded factually and confidentially.

Suspension will not be automatic. Where appropriate, protective measures, including suspension, will be considered following advice from the LADO and/or other relevant agencies and in accordance with the setting's disciplinary procedures.

LADO: LADO.Referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Whistleblowing

Playhouse encourages staff to raise concerns about unsafe practice, poor safeguarding practice or behaviour that may place children at risk.

Staff can raise concerns with:

- the Manager;
- the DSL/DDSL;
- the owner; or
- an appropriate external agency where necessary.

Staff raising concerns in good faith will be supported and protected from victimisation.

If a concern cannot be resolved internally, staff will be supported to seek advice from the appropriate external organisation.

Safe Touch and Physical Contact

Appropriate physical contact can be an important part of caring for young children, including providing comfort, reassurance, assistance and support.

Any physical contact must be appropriate, proportionate and in the child's best interests.

Staff will:

- respect children's personal space and boundaries;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- never use physical contact as punishment;
- only carry or physically assist a child where this is necessary and appropriate;
- provide comfort and reassurance when a child is distressed;
- maintain professional boundaries; and
- report and record any significant physical incident or use of physical intervention in accordance with the setting's procedures.

Electronic Devices with Imaging and Sharing Capabilities

Playhouse Pre-School respects that members of staff may bring their phones to work for use in receiving emergency phone calls. All phones and devices with a camera must be stored securely in staff lockers.

Personal mobile phones, smart watches and other personal devices capable of taking, storing or sharing images must not be used to photograph, video or record children.

Personal devices must be stored securely away from children during working hours, except where necessary to respond to an emergency.

The pre-school phone is to be used by staff for emergency contact reasons.

Photographs and videos of children will only be taken and shared in accordance with the setting's Photography, Consent and Data Protection procedures. Images will only be used for authorised purposes and where appropriate consent has been obtained.

Parents, carers and visitors must follow the setting's rules regarding photography and mobile phone use.

Any safeguarding concern relating to the use of a device must be reported to the DSL.

The setting's ICT Policy and Photographic Images Policy provide further information about acceptable device use, photography, image storage and sharing.

Online Safety

Online safety forms part of safeguarding at Playhouse.

Staff will remain alert to concerns including:

- children being exposed to inappropriate or harmful content;
- online grooming or exploitation;
- inappropriate contact or communication;
- sharing of images;
- harmful or discriminatory content;
- inappropriate use of technology by adults; and
- concerns arising from children's use of digital devices.

Any online safeguarding concern will be reported to the DSL and managed in the same way as other safeguarding concerns.

Staff must maintain professional boundaries when using social media and digital communication and must not communicate with children or families through personal accounts inappropriately.

The setting's ICT Policy provides further guidance on the safe and appropriate use of technology.

Planning

The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision, whilst also allowing the free movement of children and adults. Staff will avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations with children and will ensure that, wherever practicable, interactions take place in areas where other adults are able to see or hear what is taking place.

Where lone working is necessary, such as during the breakfast club period, the arrangements detailed in the Lone Working section of this policy and the associated lone-working risk assessment will be followed. The child's safety and welfare will remain the priority at all times.

Where a child needs assistance in the toilets, the setting's safeguarding procedures will be followed and the member of staff will maintain appropriate professional boundaries and ensure that the child receives the necessary assistance safely.

Lone Working

Playhouse Pre-School recognises that, on occasions, a staff member may be required to work alone with a child. This may occur during the Breakfast Club session, when up to two children may attend, or at the end of the day if a child's parent/carer is late to collect. The setting has considered the safeguarding and health and safety implications of this arrangement and has completed a specific risk assessment covering lone working during Breakfast Club and, where necessary, following late collection.

The Manager/Owner will be the designated lone worker responsible for the child or children.

Lone working will only take place where it has been assessed as safe and appropriate and where all statutory staffing, supervision and safeguarding requirements continue to be met.

The Manager/Owner is appropriately qualified and trained to undertake this role. She holds a Level 3 early years qualification, is paediatric first-aid trained and has completed safeguarding training. Appropriate safer recruitment and safeguarding checks are in place.

The following arrangements will apply:

- The lone worker will have access to the setting's mobile phone so that emergency assistance can be summoned immediately if required.
- The lone worker will ensure that the setting is secure and that children cannot leave the premises unsupervised.
- The child or children will remain within areas of the setting that allow for appropriate supervision at all times.
- The lone worker will maintain professional boundaries and follow all safeguarding procedures and the setting's Code of Conduct.
- Personal care and toileting will be managed in accordance with the setting's normal safeguarding procedures and the child's individual needs.
- The lone worker will have access to the setting's first-aid equipment and will follow the setting's first-aid and accident/incident procedures.
- In the event of an accident, illness, safeguarding concern or other emergency, the lone worker will follow the relevant emergency and safeguarding procedures and contact the appropriate emergency service, parent/carer or safeguarding lead as necessary.
- Emergency contact details for the child's parent/carer and relevant staff will be readily available.
- Where practicable, the Manager/Owner will ensure that another responsible person is aware that she is working alone and has an agreed means of contacting assistance if required.

If additional children attend Breakfast Club, the Manager/Owner will review the staffing arrangements before the session continues and ensure that the required staffing, supervision and safeguarding arrangements remain in place.

Lone working will not continue where a child's individual needs, circumstances or behaviour indicate that an additional member of staff is required.

Any changes to the number of children attending, the premises, staffing arrangements or individual children's needs will be considered as part of the ongoing risk assessment.

Late Collection

The setting recognises that parents/carers may occasionally be delayed when collecting their child. Where a parent/carer is late, staff will follow the setting's Late Collection Policy and procedures.

Where the delay means that the Manager/Owner remains at the setting alone with a child after other staff have completed their normal working hours, the Manager/Owner will continue to supervise the child safely until they are collected.

The Manager/Owner will:

- make reasonable attempts to contact the parent/carers using the emergency contact details held by the setting;
- maintain appropriate supervision of the child at all times;
- ensure that the child remains safe and settled within the setting;
- record the late collection in accordance with the setting's procedures;
- seek additional assistance if the circumstances indicate that this is necessary; and
- follow the setting's safeguarding procedures if the parent/carers cannot be contacted or if there are concerns about the child's welfare.

Lone working following a late collection is intended to be an occasional contingency and is not intended to replace appropriate staffing arrangements during the setting's normal operating hours.

Safeguarding and Emergency Situations

In the event of a lockdown, evacuation or other emergency situation, the safety and welfare of children remains the first priority.

Staff will follow the setting's Health and Safety Policy and Emergency Procedures, together with any instructions from Longmeadow Primary School or the emergency services.

Any safeguarding concerns arising during or following an emergency will be reported to the DSL/DDSL and managed in accordance with this policy.

Safer Sleep

Playhouse recognises the importance of safe sleep arrangements, particularly for babies and younger children.

Staff will follow the setting's Safer Sleep Policy and the current EYFS safer-sleep requirements.

Any concern relating to a child's sleep, sleeping environment or individual health needs will be managed in accordance with the child's individual care requirements and the relevant setting procedures.

Children with Additional Needs

Children with SEND, communication difficulties, medical needs or other additional needs may be particularly vulnerable to safeguarding risks.

Staff will:

- recognise that children may communicate concerns in different ways;
- take changes in behaviour or presentation seriously;
- make reasonable adjustments to support communication;
- safeguard children in a way that takes account of their individual needs;
- work with parents/carers and relevant professionals; and
- ensure that a child's additional needs do not prevent concerns from being recognised or acted upon.

Injuries and Unexplained Marks

If a child sustains an injury while at Playhouse, it will be recorded in accordance with the setting's Accident and Incident procedures and the parent/carer will be informed appropriately.

If a child arrives with an injury sustained elsewhere, staff may ask the parent/carer for an explanation and record the information where appropriate.

Where an injury is unexplained, inconsistent with the explanation given, or gives rise to a safeguarding concern, it will be reported to the DSL immediately.

Any unexplained bruise or injury in a non-mobile child will be treated as a safeguarding concern and reported immediately to the DSL.

The DSL will consider whether further advice, referral or action is required.

Photographs of injuries will not normally be taken by Playhouse staff unless specifically requested by the police or another appropriate safeguarding agency. Any such images will be handled securely and in accordance with instructions given by that agency.

Training

All staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and ongoing professional development.

Training will ensure that staff understand:

- their safeguarding responsibilities;
- how to recognise signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- how to respond to a disclosure;
- how to record and report concerns;
- the role of the DSL and DDSL;
- online safety and digital safeguarding;
- safer working practices;
- the importance of professional boundaries;
- information sharing and confidentiality; and
- current local safeguarding procedures.

Staff will receive regular safeguarding updates and training in accordance with current requirements.

Curriculum

Playhouse supports children to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to help keep themselves safe.

This is approached in an age-appropriate way and may include:

- recognising trusted adults;
- understanding feelings and emotions;
- learning about personal boundaries;
- developing confidence to communicate concerns;
- understanding safe and unsafe situations;
- learning about relationships and respect; and
- developing resilience and independence.

Teaching will be appropriate to the children's ages and stages of development and will not place responsibility for safeguarding onto children.

Looked After Children

Where a child attending Playhouse is looked after or is subject to a care arrangement, the setting will work with the child's social worker, foster carer, parents where appropriate and other relevant professionals.

The child will receive the same warm, inclusive and supportive care as all other children.

The key person and DSL will ensure that relevant information is shared appropriately and that the child's individual needs are understood and supported.

Any safeguarding concern relating to a looked-after child will be managed in accordance with this policy and the child's care arrangements.

Domestic Abuse and Operation Encompass

Playhouse Pre-School participates in Operation Encompass.

Where information is received through Operation Encompass, it will be treated as confidential safeguarding information and shared only with those who need to know.

The DSL and DDSLs will act as appropriately trained Key Adults for Operation Encompass.

The setting will not investigate domestic abuse incidents. Where information received gives rise to further safeguarding concerns, the DSL will follow the setting's safeguarding procedures and make a referral where appropriate.

The setting will take care not to take any action that could place a child or non-abusing adult at further risk.

Working with Other Agencies

Playhouse works cooperatively with:

- Hertfordshire Children's Services;
- Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership;
- the police;
- health professionals;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer;
- Longmeadow Primary School where appropriate;
- relevant early help services; and
- other agencies involved in safeguarding children.

The setting will provide relevant information and cooperate with safeguarding enquiries where required.

Records

Safeguarding records will be:

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- factual and accurate;
- dated and signed;
- stored securely;
- kept confidential;
- shared only where appropriate and lawful; and
- retained in accordance with the setting's records retention arrangements and data protection requirements.

Safeguarding records will be kept separately from general children's records where appropriate and will only be accessed by authorised people.

The setting's Confidentiality Policy provides further information about data protection, confidentiality and information rights.

Ofsted Notifications

Playhouse will notify Ofsted of serious incidents, allegations and other matters where notification is required by the EYFS, Ofsted or other applicable statutory requirements. The DSL/Manager will ensure that the relevant notification is made within the required timescale.

Further Guidance and Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Emergency Closure Policy;
- Emergency/Lockdown and Invacuation Procedures;
- Safer Sleep Policy;
- Behaviour Management Policy;
- Photography and Consent Policy;
- ICT Policy;
- Confidentiality Policy;
- Complaints Procedure;
- Disciplinary Procedure;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Attendance Policy;
- Medication and Health Policies; and
- relevant Hertfordshire safeguarding procedures.

Legal References

Primary Legislation

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Childcare Act 2006
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Equality Act 2010
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

Statutory Guidance and Frameworks

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers – current version
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People – current statutory guidance
- Prevent duty guidance
- Relevant Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures
- Relevant local authority early years and safeguarding guidance
- Current Ofsted guidance applicable to early years providers

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-school.

Adopted on 24th April 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 25th September 2026 by Z. Munford