

Mrs Bonds Village Nursery
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy During COVID-19 Pandemic

Policy aims: This policy is to clarify how our safeguarding and child protection protocols could be effected by the Covid-19 outbreak and how we will respond

Mrs Bonds Village Nursery fully recognises the responsibility to have arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children during these unprecedented times. There have been significant changes within our setting in response to the outbreak. Many children are/have been at home and staffing is likely to be significantly affected through illness and self-isolation.

This revised addendum of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy contains details of our changed safeguarding arrangements during the current pandemic in order to protect all children, whether attending the setting or remaining at home, from harm and abuse.

The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage 2017 (Section 3 Safeguarding and Welfare requirements) and Working Together 2018 apply with regard to keeping children safe. Despite the changes, the setting's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is fundamentally the same: children and young people always come first, staff should respond robustly to safeguarding concerns and contact the Designated Person/s for Child Protection (DP) in line with our established safeguarding procedure. Early Years Settings will remain open to all children as advised by government guidance 'National lockdown: Stay at Home', 4.1.21. Where it is not possible for children to attend, regular contact will be made by the setting to those with vulnerabilities (see 'Supporting Vulnerable Children' section of this document). This is in line with national expectations for primary and secondary schools as advised by the above government guidance. Our setting is operating within the following national guidance:

- Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare Settings: Department for Education (DfE), 30.12.20
- National lockdown: Stay at Home: HM Government, 4.1.21

Our setting has a COVID-19 Risk Assessment that is regularly reviewed and updated in line with national guidance.

This guidance supports owners/committees and DSLs in settings;

- With regard to safeguarding, the best interests of the child must always continue to be a priority
- A DSL should always be available on site while the setting is open. In the unusual circumstance this is not possible a DSL will be contactable by phone or email and all staff should have these contact details.
- If staff have a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to follow the setting's usual safeguarding procedures. This includes the Child Protection procedure which requires staff to advise a DSL immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in school or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.
- It is essential that unsuitable people are not able to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children.
- Children should continue to be protected when they are on-line.

The Designated Persons for Child Protection in our setting are: Mrs Kelly Booker and Mrs Caroline Kellerher

Our setting will:

- Aim to have a DSL on site when the setting is open (to be able to access relevant records and take the necessary action)
- Ensure there are contingency arrangements should the DSL not be available (a DSL is always available by phone or email)
- Ensure all staff know who the DSL is on a daily basis
- Ensure that the DSL knows how to contact Bromley Children Safeguarding Partnership and the MASH Team.
- DSL training is available for staff new to the role and DSL who require refresher training (recommended every 2 years) to support settings with the above responsibilities.
- DSLs will continue to read and implement as relevant updates added guidance and legislation

Supporting Vulnerable Children

We have put in place specific safeguarding arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Children in Care
- Previous Children in Care
- Children subject to a child protection plan
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker. (There is an expectation that children with a social worker must attend the setting (or another setting by arrangement), unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child).
- Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Children on the edge of Social Care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker. Where required these children will be offered a place at setting (or another setting by arrangement).
- Other children the setting considers vulnerable. More children may be added to this group in response to concerns raised with the DSL. This may also include families where there is Domestic Abuse. These children can be offered care at the setting if required.

Each of the above children has an individual support plan which has been shared with other agencies involved in their care.

Maintaining Contact with Vulnerable Children Not Currently Attending

We recognise that some children will not be attending our setting due to current government restrictions. Other reasons for not attending may include self-isolation, shielding or parental choice.

- If our setting is closed or vulnerable children are absent the DSL should contact other relevant professionals to make them aware and agree any further action required.
- For children who are currently on a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Child In Need Plan (CIN), the DSL should have weekly contact, ideally by phone. If there are any concerns, the DSL should contact the child's social worker as normal.
- For all other vulnerable children, the DSL should have weekly contact and depending on the child's individual circumstances
- In exceptional circumstances, where a phone call may not suffice there may need to be some face-to-face contact, consider using Zoom or similar platform.

General Attendance of all Children

Where a child is expected and does not arrive, we will follow our attendance procedure and make contact with the family. The risk of COVID-19 does not override the duty on the setting to ensure children are safe.

Supporting Children in the Setting

The pressures on children and their families at this time are significant. There may be heightened awareness of family pressures through being contained in a small area, poverty and financial or health anxiety. Supporting children's wellbeing will be at the forefront of our approach and staff will seek to provide reassurance as we manage the transition period. Staff will talk to children about the changes to their day in an age appropriate manner, acknowledge and listen to their anxieties and support them to understand the altered routines. Staff will be aware of the mental health of both children and their parents and carers, informing the DSL or Wellbeing Lead about any concerns. We recognise that for some children, home may not be a safe space, and there may be children who are relieved to return to the setting. Staff have been reminded of the need to respond sensitively to children's differing experiences during the period of closure. Staff have been asked to be particularly vigilant, as more children return to the setting, for signs and indicators that suggest a child may have experienced abuse or neglect. Staff have been trained about how to manage a disclosure from a child, and understand that any safeguarding concerns, including those that relate to the period of setting closure, must be referred immediately to a setting DSL in the usual way.

Child on Child Abuse

We recognise the potential for abuse to occur between children, especially in the context of a setting closure or partial closure. Our staff will remain vigilant to the signs of peer-on-peer abuse, including those between children who are not currently attending our provision. Extra care should be taken where groups have mixed age, developmental stages, are attending other settings or schools as an interim measure and similar. When making contact with these families our staff will ask about relationships between children

On-line Risks

Children may be using the internet more during this period. Staff will be aware of the signs and indicators of cyberbullying and other risks online and apply the same child-centred safeguarding practices as when children were learning at the setting. During periods of closure staff are able to access Tapestry from home to set home learning and complete work/reports/updates. Staff must adhere to the Tapestry confidentiality and Security rules

Allegations or concerns about staff

We remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern about colleagues, no matter how small, to the Ofsted Registered Person, Manager or DSL. All new permanent/temporary staff or volunteers will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of our safeguarding practices and know how to take action, using the setting procedures, if they are concerned. The arrangements to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at the Local Authority remain unchanged. The setting will continue to follow the duty to refer to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult as relevant.

An allegation may relate to a person who works or volunteers with children who has:

- 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

If an allegation is made against a person who works or volunteers with children, the following action will be taken (as 'Allegation against a person who works or volunteers with children' flowchart and guidance):

- The setting will ensure the immediate safety of the children.
- The setting will not start to investigate but will immediately contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO):
 - If the LADO decides the matter is a child protection case, external/internal agencies (e.g. police) will be informed by the LADO and the setting will act upon the advice given to ensure that any investigation is not jeopardised.
 - The setting will notify Ofsted of a significant event
 - It may be necessary for the employer to suspend the alleged perpetrator. Suspension is a neutral act to allow a thorough and fair investigation.
 - If it is agreed that the matter is not a child protection case, the setting will investigate the matter themselves.

Policy written during Covid Pandemic 2020

Policy will be reviewed and updated as required