

05 - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY v2

Let Us Play Scheme

(Play Scheme for children with profound
and multiple learning difficulties)

Registered Charity No. 1072059

Date of Policy Issued/Review	31 July 2025
Name of Chairperson	Juliet Cheriton-Gerard
Signature of Chairperson	
Management Committee Name	Victoria Ashton
Management Committee Signature	
Review Date	30 July 2026

POLICY STATEMENT

We intend to create an environment in which children are free from abuse and in which any suspected abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to.

That all members of staff recognise their responsibility in both ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all the children on the play scheme and for reporting all suspected cases of child abuse.

Due to the severity and complexity of the children's needs, the lack of verbal communication, physical disability and lack of personal awareness or danger, all staff to be made aware of the need for vigilance in detecting changes in children's behaviour, appearance and emotional responses.

These issues will be discussed at the training sessions before and during the play scheme as well as the policy itself being on display at the officer's desk. At training sessions all staff will be reminded of the importance and the role they play as individuals in making the policy work and to continue to encourage them to report any concerns with complete confidentiality and without fear of reprisal.

PRINCIPLES

- The welfare of children is paramount
- All Staff are responsible for Safeguarding Children.
- All Staff must take responsibility for understanding the procedures.
- If abuse is suspected, your suspicions must be reported. Failure to do so is disciplinary matter.
- Any area of doubt or concern regarding these procedures should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- The DSL at LUPS is Vicky Ashton – Playscheme Manager.
- The Deputy DSL is Donna Blake – Playscheme Leader

Child abuse has been defined as ‘harm to children under the age of 18, by parents, carers or others, either by direct acts, or by failure to prevent abuse from happening’.

CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

There are four categories of abuse as follows:

1. **Physical abuse** – is the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or the failure to prevent injury. This can include bodily assaults such as bruises, burns, abrasions, fractures, dislocations, wounds or marks of physical restraint.
2. **Neglect** – is the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger. This can include failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, or to be withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition, clothing and heating. The persistent failure to provide these necessities can result in significant impairment of the child’s health or development, including failure to thrive.
3. **Emotional abuse** – the severe or persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection of a child which leads to adverse effects on a child’s behavioural and emotional development. It might include bullying, shouting, threats or harm or abandonment, persistent ignoring, undermining, ridiculing, racial abuse, deprivation of contact, blaming or controlling.
4. **Sexual abuse** – forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual acts, whether or not the child understands what is happening, or is unable to give informed consent. It is also the failure to prevent the sexual exploitation of a child. It can involve adults known to the child, (including family members), carers, friends, staff or other children. Sexual activity can include caressing, fondling, mutual masturbation, penetration or non-penetrative acts, encouraging children to behave in sexual inappropriate ways, exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts, or to be allowed access to any pornographic activities.

RECOGNITION OF ABUSE

The following are some indicators (not confirmation) of abuse:

- Staff need to be aware that a child may disclose information about abuse.
- The child has an injury for which the explanation appears to be inconsistent.
- The child's behaviour, personality or performance may change. They may become more aggressive or alternatively withdrawn or sexually explicit.
- The child may appear not to trust adults with whom they would be expected to have, or once had a close relationship, and do not appear to be able to mix socially or make friends.
- Their appearance may look increasingly neglected or he/she may lose or put on weight for no apparent reason.
- The child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age or cognitive ability and may sometimes act in sexually explicit ways.

There are other signs or symptoms of child abuse. These are discussed in the child protection training for staff.

Staff need to be aware that care must be taken not to make assumptions or to misinterpret information.

- It is **not** your responsibility to decide whether a child is being abused.
- **It is your responsibility** to act on your concerns immediately.
- Never assume that someone else will have reported the same concern.
- Any concerns that you have about a child should be reported. You should record, date and sign any information and pass to the DSL or deputy DSL as soon as possible so that exact details (including wording used, if applicable) are easily recalled.

You must also keep in mind that disabled children and vulnerable young people are particularly open to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening (or has happened) to them.

STAFF RECRUITMENT

To create a safe and secure environment we will ensure Safer Recruitment processes are followed. This includes:

- Exclude known offenders
- It will be made clear to all applicants for any post within the play scheme that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- All staff will be asked to provide at least two references, which will be taken up before employment commences.
- All staff has an agreed probationary period during which time they shadow experienced staff and are under the supervision of senior assistants who help assess their skills and suitability for continued employment on the playscheme.

- Our children are very vulnerable, and our staff are well trained in observation. All staff over the age of 16 will be subject to an Enhanced DBS check.
- Recognising that these checks will only show known offenders there are no circumstances where a child and their 1:1 staff member will not be under the supervision of a senior.
- All staff are required to provide proof of their eligibility to work in the UK.

STAFF TRAINING

In addition to ongoing training before and during each play scheme, LUPS will seek out training opportunities for all staff to be trained in recognising symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

The DSL and Deputy will undergo external training every two years to ensure knowledge is both current and maintained.

Child protection training for staff will be provided annually by the DSL (or in their absence, the Deputy).

All new staff receive child protection training during their induction. All staff working with children and young people are to be aware of the requirements of the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance which can be found here:

<http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>

GOOD PRACTICE

There are no circumstances whereby a staff member would be left alone with a child – a Senior would always be in the vicinity.

There will always be two Senior Assistants in each area and the children all have one-to-one support.

No staff are not permitted to have mobile phones or cameras on their person during the play scheme. Phones (and any other device which has recording or photography) brought into the play scheme are to be left in the staff room.

Only the Senior Assistants are trained and responsible for the personal care of incontinent children.

All other children can toilet themselves with reminders to wash their hands. Those children who can, will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence through adult support, to make choices and in finding names for their own feelings and acceptable ways of expressing them. This will enable children to have the confidence and communication to resist inappropriate approaches.

For those children who are the most vulnerable, all staff will be continually aware of their presence and note any change of mood or demeanour.

The layout of the Play scheme will permit constant supervision of children.

Respond appropriately to suspicion of abuse.

The children of LUPS are most vulnerable to neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. All changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, responses or emotional presentation and stability will be brought to the attention of the DSL (or Deputy) who will be present during all play schemes.

These exchanges will be made confidentially in the first instance and investigated immediately.

Where appropriate, parents will normally be the first point of reference, though suspicions will also be referred as appropriate to Children Services via the online Inter-agency referral form (IARF).

All such suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential, shared only by those who need to know. This would normally be the Senior Assistant and LUPS Officer present at the time.

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF SUSPECT OR ACTUAL CHILD ABUSE

If a disclosure of abuse is made to a member of staff, the following procedure must be followed:

- Noting that the majority of our children are unable to communicate their feelings verbally, particular attention should be paid to any visual signs of communication.
- Listen or watch attentively to what the child is communicating and show them that you believe everything that is being said.
- Do not interrupt or challenge what the child is saying.
- Do not ask leading questions (thereby putting suggestions forward). If you need to ask a question to clarify a point at the end of a disclosure, then only ask an open question (these questions cannot be answered by a 'yes' or 'no').
- Thank the child for confiding in you and reassure them that they were right to do so.
- Staff must make it clear to the child that such information cannot be heard in total confidence; tell them that you will need to inform the DSL who will be able to help.
- The details of the disclosure should be written down, signed and dated by you as soon as possible, (not in front of the child), and passed to the DSL.
- The matter should be treated with complete confidentiality.
- Any member of staff who receives a disclosure of abuse or has reasonable concern to believe that abuse has taken place, can refer to a Senior member of staff, but **must** refer to the DSL.

- **No further interviewing of the child should take place in the play scheme by any member of staff.**
- The DSL and/or Deputy DSL will then agree a plan of action.
- All details, including the plan of action will be recorded by the DSL and kept secure in the DSL File.
- Any referral to Children Services must be actioned within 2 hours of the report being received by the DSL.
- Communication with Carers and Parents will be followed up by the DSL, as and when appropriate, and on the advice of the Children Services Team.
- The task of deciding whether or not, abuse has occurred, rests with the professional agencies (Children Services and the Police) – not play scheme staff.

ACTION CONCERNING MEDICAL EXAMINATION

If recent sexual assault is suspected, in order to preserve forensic evidence, the child should not be medically examined other than by a Doctor approved by Children Services or the Police. An exception may be made if there appears to be injuries so severe as to require immediate medical attention.

ACTION CONCERNING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF

It is essential that any allegations of abuse made against a member of staff is dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently in order to provide effective protection for the child and at the same time, support the person who is subject to the allegation.

The procedure for dealing with allegations against a member of staff should deal with all cases in which it is alleged that a member of staff:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Committed a criminal offence against a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

In cases where abuse of a child by a member of staff is suspected or alleged, the following procedure should be followed.

- Allegations should be reported to the DSL immediately.
- If an allegation is made against the DSL, then it should be reported to the deputy DSL or Children Services and the Chief Executive.
- An accurate written record of the allegation must be made.
- Following discussion, the decision needs to be made whether it's a Child Protection case, disciplinary investigation or whether the allegation is unfounded.
- If the case involves any of the four categories of abuse, then this must take priority and a Child Protection referral must be made to Hampshire County Council LADO.

- The Play Scheme will also need to take advice from Children Services regarding informing the parents and the accused.
- The play scheme will take no further action as the Police and/or Children Services will then proceed with the investigation.
- The DSL will inform Ofsted.

Depending upon the circumstances, it may be required to suspend the member of staff on full pay without prejudice, while investigations are carried out. The child concerned will receive help and support from relevant staff. The member of staff accused will also receive support from a named senior member of staff.

If anyone has a suspicion about another member of staff or any other person, then this must be reported to the DSL. Failure to do so is a disciplinary matter. It is everyone's responsibility to be aware of this policy and to ensure that vigilance and common sense prevail at all times.

AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY AND STATUTORY PROVISION IN CHILD ABUSE

Local Authority Children's Services have the primary responsibility for the care and protection of children who are abused or at risk of abuse. They have a duty to investigate any information received suggesting that a child may be in need of protection (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989). This is usually done jointly with the Police.

HAMPSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm, phone 0300 555 1384

At all other times, contact the out-of-hours service, phone 0300 555 1373

DSL should complete the [Inter Agency Referral Form \(IARF\)](#) to report child welfare and safeguarding concerns.

HAMPSHIRE DESIGNATED OFFICER/LADO: 01962 876364 (For allegations against Staff)

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD: Tel: 01962 876231

Clarendon House
Monarch Way
Winchester
SO22 5PW

OFSTED: Tel: 0845 6404040 or 0300 1231231

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WDh

REFERENCES

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – 2023
<http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/>
- Child Care Act 2024
- Keeping children safe in education (Sept 2024)

ASSOCIATED POLICY'S

- Confidentiality Policy (7)
- Complaints Policy (14)
- Safety Policy (10)
- Equality & Diversity Policy (6)
- Prevent Policy (21)
- Safer Recruitment Policy (22)