

# MARDEN PLAY SCHEME

## 29: Child Protection/Safeguarding Children

Our Play Scheme believes that 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.

The Play Scheme will appoint a member of staff as the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer. This Officer will have suitable experience, training and expertise, and will be responsible for liaising with social services, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Ofsted in any child protection matter.

The Play Scheme's child protection procedures comply with all relevant legislation and other guidance or advice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) formally known as the Area Child Protection Committees (ACPC).

The Play Scheme is committed to reviewing its Safeguarding Children/Child Protection policy and procedures at regular intervals.

### (1) Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse manifests itself in a variety of different ways, some overt and others much less so. An appropriate number of staff have child protection training and will be vigilant to signs and evidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.

**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 penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Showing children pornographic materials, sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways 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 that 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 child.

### (2) Staff Support and Training

The Play Scheme is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection through the provision of support and training to staff. Therefore, the Play Scheme will ensure that:

- All staff are carefully recruited, have verified references and have full and up to date DBS checks.

- All staff will be made aware of the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection policy during their induction.
- All staff, who have any concerns, will be listened to by a Councillor, or employee, of Marden Parish Council.
- We will endeavour to ensure that as many staff as possible receive regular training and supervision in child protection issues and are provided with any relevant information and guidance.
- All staff are provided with supervision and management support commensurate with their responsibilities in relation to child protection, and their requirement to maintain caring and safe relationships with children.
- All staff are aware of the main indicators of child abuse.
- All staff are aware of their statutory requirements in respect of the disclosure or discovery of child abuse and the procedure for doing so. Staff are instructed to report the disclosure or discovery of abuse to the Manager.
- The Play Scheme 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.
- Any member of staff under investigation for the alleged abuse of a child, will be subject to the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures policy.

### **(3) Safe Caring**

All staff understand the Play Scheme's child protection procedures and have had appropriate training and guidance in the principles of safe caring. To this end:

- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise time when members of staff are left alone with a child. If staff are alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open.
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff this will be recorded fully in the Incident Record Book.
- Staff will never carry out a personal task for children that they can do for 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 into the toilet. Staff are aware that this and other 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.
- 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.

### **(4) Dealing with Allegations**

The Play Scheme is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively. The Play Scheme will not carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. On discovering an allegation of abuse, the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer will immediately refer the case to

the local statutory child protection agencies. 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 manager, the Registered Person and the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgment 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 include full details of the alleged incident; details of all the parties involved; any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties; relevant dates, times and locations and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff. The Play Scheme will demonstrate great care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse.
- The manager and the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidentially.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against the manager or the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer, the Registered Person will be informed as soon as possible. They will then assume responsibility for the situation.
- 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.
3. Ask open questions that encourages 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.

Where possible, the Play Scheme will always respect the wishes of children and young people who do not consent to share confidential information. However, the lack of consent can be override if the facts of the case are in the public interest.

The Play Scheme will always consider the safety and welfare of a child or young person when making decisions to share information about them. Where there is concern that the child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, the child's safety and welfare must be the overriding factor.

Staff will be made aware of the Department of Health's booklet 'What to do if You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused?' (HMGovt 2006), it's recent guidance on 'Protecting Children from Harm' and Government's Statutory Guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" 2013.

## **(5) Referring Allegations to Child Protection Agencies**

If the manager or the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer 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 social services department.

The manager or the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Officer will communicate as much information about the allegation and related incidents as is consistent with advice given by social services and the police.

At all times, the safety, protection and interests of children concerned will take precedence. The manager and staff will work with and support parents/carers as far as they are legally able.

The Play Scheme 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 or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises.