**1.16 Child Protection: Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

***safeguarding children and vulnerable adults***

**EYFS key themes and commitments**

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| **A Unique Child** | **Positive Relationships** | **Enabling Environments** | **Learning and Development** |
| 1.3 Keeping safe | 2.1 Respecting each other  2.2 Parents as partners | 3.4 The wider context | 4.4 Personal, social and emotional development |

**Policy statement**

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and vulnerable adults. Sandbach Heath (St. John’s) Playgroup works in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, which states that ‘Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with’. The document also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, our setting will ensure the child’s wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems will be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.’ Sandbach Heath (St. John’s) Playgroup will continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the child, with full consideration to impact on that individual child’s emotional and mental health and well-being.

**Purpose and Aim:**

Children may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this policy is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues, Sandbach Heath (St. John’s) Playgroup have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy::1.2 Child Protection Policy and 13.1 Safeguarding Policy

**Framework and Legislation**:

This policy is supported by the key principles of the Children’s Act, 1989 that the child’s welfare is paramount. Another key document that focuses adult thinking towards the views of the child is Working Together 2018, highlighting that every assessment of a child, ‘must be informed by the views of the child’ and within that ‘It is important to understand the resilience of the individual child when planning appropriate services. (Working Together, 2018:53) This is clearly echoed by Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2018 through ensuring procedures are in place in schools and settings to hear the voice of the child.

**Assessments:**

Every assessment we make will reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context. We always ensure that the needs of individual children are distinct considerations

**Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour:**

Abusive behaviour can happen to children in settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm. Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’ or ‘part of growing up’.

**Types of abuse:**

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

**Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.):**

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a child has engaged in such behaviour, including accidently before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

**Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.):**

Sexually harmful behaviour from a child is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a child engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the child who instigates it as well as the child it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

**Prejudiced Behaviour:**

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

**Expected action taken from all staff**

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm. It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. In all cases of peer on peer abuse it is necessary that all staff are trained in dealing with such incidents, talking to children and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters.

**Gather the Facts**

We speak to all staff who were present and children dependant on age and understanding, using consistent language and open questions.  The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the child to tell you what happened. We would only Only interrupt a child from this to gain clarity with open questions, ‘where, when, why, who’. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

* Track evidence through observations, incident reports and ABC charts.
* Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)
* Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a child to be able to harm another?
* From the ABC tracker charts, can you define a trigger?
* Are staff consistent with behaviour management?
* Are all new staff to the room informed of the circumstances and required amount of supervision?
* Are the parents working together with the setting on using the same strategies? And are the parents consistent at home?
* Decide on your next course of action

If from the information that we gather we believe any child to be at risk of significant harm we make a safeguarding referral to social care immediately ChECS (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also). If this is the case, once social care has been contacted and make a decision on what will happen next. It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case you may challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager. If on discussion however, you agree with the decision, you may then be left to inform parents.

**Informing parents:**

 If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care you have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then you need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents.

**Points to consider: What is the age of the children involved?**

How old are the children involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4-year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

**Where did the incident or incidents take place?**

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

**What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?**      Can each of the children give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the child involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one child different from another and why?

**What is each of the children’s own understanding of what occurred?**

Do the children know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the child explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the child understand the impact of their behaviour on the other person? In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from ChECS.

**Repetition:**

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

**Next:**

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

**For the child who has displayed harmful behaviour**

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the child has behaved in such a way. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF, strengthening families and early help referral and the child may require additional support from family members. Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the child has been met, it is important that the child receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the child they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. Even following the conclusion of any investigation, the behaviour that the child has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi- agency response to ensure that the needs of the child and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the child and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the child or protective strategies if the child feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

**After care:**

It is important that following the incident the child involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident.

**Preventative Strategies for Settings**

It is important to develop appropriate strategies in order to prevent the issue of peer on peer abuse rather than manage the issues in a reactive way. It is necessary that staff consider each issue and each individual in their own right before taking action.

At Sandbach Heath (St. John’s) playgroup, we reserve the right to terminate a contract if we feel that we have exhausted every possible strategy to avoid a child hurting another child; we have evidence that the child’s behaviour is not being dealt with consistently at home; advice to take child to an outside agency, ie. GP, Health Visitor is not followed.

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| This policy was adopted by | Sandbach Heath (St. Johns) Playgroup | *(name of provider)* |
| On |  | *(date)* |
| Date to be reviewed |  | *(date)* |
| Signed on behalf of the provider |  | |
| Name of signatory |  | |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) |  | |

**Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications**

* Safeguarding Children (2013)
* Safeguarding through Effective Supervision (2013)
* The New Early Years Employee Handbook (2016)
* People Management in the Early Years (2016)

\*A ‘young person’ is defined as 16 to 19 years old – in our setting they may be a student, worker, volunteer or parent.

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