

8.8 Staff Personal Safety including Home Visits

Policy statement

We believe that the health and safety of all staff is of paramount importance and that all staff have the right to work in a safe environment. We support safe working both on and off the premises, acknowledging the needs and diversity of children and their family.

Procedures

General

- All staff in the building early in the morning, or late in the evening, ensure doors and windows are locked.
- Where possible, at least the first two members of staff to arrive in the building arrive together, and the last two members of staff in the building leave together.
- Visitors are generally only allowed access with prior appointments and only admitted once their identity has been verified.
- No petty cash is kept on the premises.
- Members of staff make a note in the diary of meetings they are attending, who they are meeting and when they are expected back.
- Any member of staff working alone and off-site, will have access to the setting's mobile phone and will have a safety word to use if they feel unsafe.
- Managers have good liaison with local police and ask for advice on safe practice where there are issues or concerns.

Lone working

Occasionally staff may need to work alone within the Preschool, for example, when doing work that cannot be done with children around for safety reasons, or when a staff member is using the office at the end of the day.

In this event staff must adhere to the following safety guidance:

- The identity of any visitors should be inspected and considered satisfactory before they are allowed entry to the building.
- Staff working alone in the Preschool should have access to a telephone line for emergencies.
- Staff will have an emergency word/phrase, which is made known to all staff in the setting. In the event of the lone working member of staff feeling threatened or in danger, they can covertly alert other members of staff to the situation via a telephone call.
- The use of the agreed word/phrase will initiate an immediate 999 call to be made.
- Staff working alone will be made aware of any scheduled visits to the setting and these are noted in the office diary.

Home visits

The purpose of home visits is to develop and strengthen relationships, to identify needs and offer support and advice. There may be times when a member of staff needs to meet with parents/carers, and it may be most appropriate to visit the home. Meeting staff members can be a daunting prospect for some families, particularly if their own previous experiences of education and using outside agencies were less than positive. Parents/carers

may feel more secure and in control in their own homes, and therefore able to talk more freely. In familiar surroundings, they may find it easier to ask for help, support and advice and voice any concerns they may have. Home visits also provide a starting point to understanding family backgrounds and cultural needs.

Where staff members conduct home visits, this is done at the manager's discretion and the following health and safety considerations apply:

- Prior to a home visit the key person will ensure that they are familiar with the Lone Working and Home Visiting risk assessment.
- Members of staff normally do home visits alone; however, if during initial contact there are specific concerns, a joint home visit may be done, and this will be discussed at the time and a specific risk assessment completed.
- Each home visit is recorded in the diary with the name and address of the family being visited, prior to the visit taking place.
- Staff alert an agreed contact person in the setting when they are leaving to do the home visit and advise on their expected time of return. If there are any changes to the timings or other arrangements to the visit (such as location), these must be communicated in advance.
- If there is any reason for staff to feel concerned about entering premises, they do not do so, for example, if a parent appears drunk.
- Members of staff carry a mobile phone when going out on a home visit.
- Staff identify an emergency word/phrase, which is made known to all staff in the setting, so that if they feel extremely threatened or in danger on a home visit, they can covertly alert other members of staff via a telephone call to the situation. Use of the agreed word/phrase will initiate an immediate 999 call to be made.
- If staff do not return from the home visit at the designated time, the contact person attempts to phone them and continues to do so until they make contact.
- If no contact is made after a reasonable amount of time has passed, the contact person rings the police.

Dealing with agitated parents in the setting

- If a parent appears to be angry, mentally agitated or possibly hostile, two members of staff will lead the parent away from the children to a less open area but will not shut the door behind them.
- If the person is standing, staff will remain standing.
- Members of staff will try to empathise and ensure that the language they use can be easily understood.
- Staff will speak in low, even tones, below the voice level of the parent.
- Members of staff will make it clear that they want to listen and seek solutions.
- If the person makes threats and continues to be angry, members of staff make it clear that they will be unable to discuss the issue until the person stops shouting or being abusive, while avoiding potentially inflammatory expressions such as 'calm down' or 'be reasonable'.
- If threats or abuse continues, members of staff will explain that the police will be called and emphasise the inappropriateness of such behaviour in front of children.
- The manager may suspend a child for the remainder of the day, with immediate effect. If a child is suspended there will be no refund of fees paid for those sessions from which they have been suspended.

- After the event, the manager must produce a written report of the circumstances within 48 hours. The details will be recorded in the child's personal file together with any decisions made with the parents to rectify the situation, and any correspondence regarding the incident.
- Parents are expected to abide by the Parent Code of Conduct policy at all times.

| Version | Changes Made | Author | Date | Review Date |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1.0 | Baseline | P Eccleston | 26 th April 2018 | April 2019 |
| 1.1 | Minor formatting changes | N Hanlon | 18 th April 2019 | January 2020 |
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