****

**CHAPEL ROAD COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP**

***Safeguarding***

# *&*

# *Child Protection Policy*



**Date ratified by Committee:**

**Date of Review:**

**Child Protection Ethos**

*Chapel Road Community Playgroup* aims to provide the highest quality, care and education for all children attending the setting. At the Playgroup we aim to provide a warm, welcoming and caring environment within which all children can learn and develop as they play. The setting intends to work in partnership with parents/guardians to meet their needs and the needs of their children.

We in **Chapel Road Community Playgroup** have a responsibility for the safeguarding and Child Protection of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff and volunteers should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This Policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our playgroup.

**Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection**

The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are enshrined in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, “Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland” (DOH, 2017), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in Playgroups” (DENI Circular 2017/04) and the Safeguarding Board for NI Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017).

**The following Principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:**

* the child or young person’s welfare is paramount;
* the voice of the child or young person should be heard;
* parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
* partnership;
* prevention;
* responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
* protection; and
* evidence based and informed decision making.

**Other Related Policies - these Policies should be Playgroup specific:**

The playgroup has a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The Child Protection Policy therefore complements and supports a range of other playgroup policies including:

* Anti-Bullying Policy
* Attendance Policy
* Behaviour Management Policy
* Code of Conduct
* Complaints Policy
* Data Protection Policy
* Educational Visits Policy
* E-Safety Policy
* First Aid and Administration of Medicines
* Health and Safety Policy
* Intimate Care Policy
* Privacy Notice
* Records Management Policy
* Special Educational Needs
* Use of Mobile Phones/Cameras
* Use of Reasonable Force/Safe Handling
* Whistleblowing Policy

***These policies are available to parents and any parent wishing to have a copy should contact the Playgroup Leader.***

**Playgroup Safeguarding Team**

The following are members of the playgroup’s Safeguarding Team:

* Committee Child Protection Officer/ Vice-Chair -Miss Ann Kerr
* Designated Child Protection Officer-Mrs Louise Devine
* Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer- Miss Catherine Blee

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Designated/Deputy Designated Officer**

Every playgroup is required to appoint a Designated Officer with responsibility for Child Protection. They must also appoint a Deputy Designated Officer who as a member of the Safeguarding team will actively support the Designated Officer in carrying out the following duties:

* the induction and training of all playgroup staff including support staff;
* being available to discuss safeguarding or Child Protection concerns of any member of staff;
* responsibility for record keeping of all Child Protection concerns;
* maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs;
* making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate;
* liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection;
* keeping the Chair/Vice-chair informed;
* lead responsibility for the development of the playgroup’s Child Protection Policy;
* promotion of a safeguarding and Child Protection ethos in the playgroup; and
* compiling written reports to the Management Committee regarding Child Protection.
* as secretary to the Management Committee, assist in fulfilling its safeguarding and Child Protection duties;
* ensure the Management Committee are kept fully informed of all developments relating to safeguarding including changes to legislation, Policy, procedures, DE circulars, inclusion of Child Protection on the termly meeting agenda;
* to manage allegations / complaints against playgroup staff;
* to establish and manage the operational systems for safeguarding and Child Protection;
* to appoint and manage designated teacher/deputy designated teachers who are enabled to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities;
* to ensure safe and effective recruitment and selection including awareness of safeguarding and Child Protection for new staff and volunteers;
* ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy or summary of the Child Protection Policy at intake and at a minimum every 2 years; and
* to maintain the playgroup’s record of child, abuse complaints.

**Management Committee**

* a designated member for Child Protection is appointed;
* a designated and deputy designated Officer are appointed in their playgroups;
* they have a full understanding of the roles of the designated and deputy designated teachers for Child Protection;
* safeguarding and Child Protection training is given to all staff and Committee including refresher training;
* the playgroup has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and complaints procedure every two years.
* the playgroup has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016;
* there is a Code of Conduct for all adults working in the playgroup;
* all playgroup staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circular 2012/19;
* they receive a full annual report on all Child Protection matters. This report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the playgroup, including training for staff; and
* the playgroup maintains the following Child Protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2016/20 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Playgroups.

**Chair of Management Committee**

The chair of the Management Committee:

* has a pivotal role in creating and maintaining a safeguarding ethos;
* receives training from CPSS and HR;
* assumes lead responsibility in the event of a CP complaint or concern about the Leader; and
* ensures compliance with legislation, Child Protection record keeping and policies.

**Designated Officer for Child Protection**

Advises the Management Committee on: -

* the role of the Designated Officer;
* the content of Child Protection policies;
* the content of a code of conduct for adults within the playgroup;
* the content of the full annual designated CP report; and
* recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

**Other members of Playgroup Staff**

* members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures initially to the designated Officer for Child Protection or to the deputy designated Officer if she is not available;
* staff should complete the note of concern if there are safeguarding concerns such as: poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse;
* **staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions.

**Students and Volunteers**

* if any student or volunteer has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the designated Officer or deputy designated Officer if she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made and any further necessary action will be taken.

**Parents**

***The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.***

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the playgroup:

* if the child has a medical condition or educational need;
* if there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child;
* if there is any change in a child’s circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility;
* if there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from playgroup;
* if their child is absent the parent(s)/guardians have been asked to contact the staff by telephone on the first day of absence. This assures the playgroup that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: [www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection](http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection)

***It is essential that the playgroup has up to date contact details for the parent/carer.***

***Child Protection Definitions***

**Definition of Harm**

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.

Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

***Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm.***

**Harm can be caused by:**

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse

Physical abuse

Neglect

Exploitation

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child’s emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child’s peers.

**Physical Abuse** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, and engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Although ‘exploitation’ is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse

***Signs and symptoms of abuse – this section can be included as an Appendix in your Policy.***

**Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse**

The following are guidelines for use by staff should a child disclose concerns of a child protection nature.

**Receive** - listen to what the child says, without displaying shock or disbelief. Accept what is said, making brief cursory notes. These notes should be retained.

**Reassure** - ensure the child is reassured that he/she will be safe and his/her interests will come first. No promise of confidentiality can or should be made to a child or anyone else giving information about possible abuse.

**Respond** - respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer the matter. Use open questions e.g. anything else to tell me? Do not interrogate or ask leading questions- this may invalidate your evidence and the child’s in any later court proceedings. Do not criticise the perpetrator- the child may love this person and reconciliation may be possible. Explain what you have to do next and to whom you have to talk.

**Record**- make notes at the time and write these up as soon as possible afterwards. Note the time, date, place, people present as well as what is seen and said. Record key phrases/words used, noticeable non-verbal behaviour and any physical injuries. Under no circumstances should a child be photographed or a child’s clothing removed. Do not destroy original notes.

**Report**- refer the matter to the Designated Teacher. Respect confidentiality i.e. the matter should only be discussed on a need to know basis.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Do’s** | **Don’ts** |
| • Stay calm• Listen• Accept• Reassure• Explain what you are going to do• Record accurately• Seek support for yourself | • Panic/ Promise to keep secrets • Ask leading questions • Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily • Delay • Start to investigate • Do Nothing |

**Specific types of Abuse**

In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that we in **Chapel Road Community Playgroup** are aware of and have therefore included them in our Policy. Please see these in [**Appendix 1**](#appendix1)**.**

**Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our Policy. Please see these in [**Appendix 2**](#appendix2)

**Responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns**

Safeguarding is more than Child Protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to Child Protection. Child Protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm[[1]](#footnote-1).

**How a Parent can raise a Concern**

In **Chapel Road Community Playgroup** we aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child’s development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner.

If a parent has a concern they can talk to the **Playgroup Leader,** the designated or deputy designated Officer for Child Protection.

 If they are still concerned they may talk to the chair of the Management Committee. If after this a parent still has concerns they can contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman.

At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit. Details of who to contact are shown in the flowchart in [**Appendix 3**](#appendix3)**.**

**Where the Playgroup has concerns or has been given information about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff:**

In **Chapel Road Community Playgroup** if a child makes a disclosure to an Officer or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff will complete a Note of Concern (see [**Appendix 6**](#appendix6)) and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the designated Officer or with the deputy designated Officer if he/she is not available.

The designated Officer will consult with the leader or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid due delay. If required, advice may be sought from the Early Years Team Child Protection Officer. The designated Officer may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer.

If a Child Protection referral is not required the playgroup may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person’s consent.

If a Child Protection referral is required, the designated Officer will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this} unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm.

The designated Officer will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form. Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken. For further detail please see [**Appendix 4**](#appendix4)**.**

**Where a complaint has been made about possible abuse by a member of the Playgroup’s Staff or a Volunteer:**

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff the Leader (or the designated Officer if the leader is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the leader, then the designated Officer should be informed and she will inform the Chairperson of the Management Committee who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority. The procedure as outlined in [**Appendix 5**](#appendix5) will be followed.

**Consent** Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child/young person, should, where practicable, be discussed with the parent and consent sought for a referral to children's social services in the local HSC Trust, unless seeking agreement is likely to place the child/young person at further risk through delay or undermine any criminal investigative process (for example in circumstances where there are concerns or suspicions that a crime has taken place); or there is concern raised about the parent's actions or reactions. The communication/language needs of the parents/carers should be established for example in relation to disability/ethnicity and the parent's/carer's capacity to understand should be ascertained. These should be addressed through the provision of appropriate communication methods, including, where necessary, translators, signers, intermediaries or advocacy services.

Effective protection for children/young people may, on occasions, require the sharing of information without prior parental/carer consent in advance of that information being shared.

Where staff decide not to seek parental consent before making a referral to children's social services in the local Health and Social Care Trust or the police, the reason for this decision must be clearly noted in the child/young person's records and included within the verbal and written/UNOCINI referral.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child/young person, and the parents/carers have been consulted and do not consent, the following action should be taken:

* the reason for proceeding without parental consent must be recorded;
* the withholding of permission by the parent/carer must be included in the verbal and written referral to children's social services;
* the parent/carer should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

Staff making a referral may ask for their anonymity to be protected as far as possible because of a genuine threat to self/family. In such instances this anonymity should be protected with an explanation to the staff member that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information may become the subject of court processes.

**Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held “in confidence”. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with playgroup staff will be on a ‘need to know’ basis.

Where there have been, or are current, Child Protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another playgroup we will consider what information should be shared with the Designated CP Officer in the receiving playgroup.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this Policy, the playgroup data protection Policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

**Record Keeping**

In accordance with DE guidance we must consider and develop clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to Child Protection concerns.

# In order to meet these requirements all Child Protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in our Chapel Road Community Playgroup are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Officer and Leader have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of Child Protection records these records will be stored from child’s date of birth plus 30 years. If information is held electronically, whether on a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence.

**Safe Recruitment Procedures**

Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals’ access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and playgroups must ensure that all persons on playgroup property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in Chapel Road Community Playgroupare vetted / supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance.

**Code of Conduct for all Staff - Paid or Unpaid**

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interests of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child in their charge must be above reproach. All members of staff are expected to comply with the *Playgroup’s Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers* which has been approved by the Management Committee.

The school has a code of conduct for staff which is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse, by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct. It is not intended to detract from the enriching experiences children and young people gain from positive interaction with staff within the education sector. The schools code of conduct is included as Appendix 8 and is taken from the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) new guidance “Safeguarding and Child Protection in schools”

***Playgroup’s Code of Conduct is available on request***

**Safeguarding and the Preventative Curriculum**

The whole pre-school community including staff and parents are engaged in teaching ‘keeping safe’ messages through a preventative curriculum. Regular Circle Time sessions are used as a means of encouraging children to raise social and emotional concerns in a safe environment and to build self-confidence, respect and sensitivity among classmates. Child Protection documentation (e.g.: 99/10 and Area Child Protection Committees Regional Policy and Procedures 2005) are available in the staffroom. A flow diagram of how a parent may make a complaint is also on display. An enlarged flow diagram for a teacher allegation is in the staff room.

Our playgroup seeks to promote pupils’ awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to Child Protection through its curriculum. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the playgroup’s personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resiliencies of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the safeguarding team and approved every 2 years by the Management Committee for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the playgroups staff induction and training programme and as part of day to day practice. Compliance with the Policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the designated Officer for Child Protection and periodically by the Playgroups Safeguarding Team. The Management Committee will also monitor Child Protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the designated teacher.

***This policy has been recently updated with an Addendum. Each addendum provides additional information to ensure compliant and safe provision and practice during the coronavirus pandemic.***

**Date Policy Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Officer)**

 **(Leader)**

 **\_\_\_\_\_\_**  **(Chair of Management Committee)**

**Appendix 1**

**Appendix 1**

**Specific Types of Abuse**

**Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim in order to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child’s/young person’s loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

 If the staff in Chapel Road Community Playgroup become aware of signs that may indicate grooming they will take early action and follow the playgroup’s Child Protection policies and procedures.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. (Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. DHSSPS version 2.0 2017)

The key factor that distinguishes cases of CSE from other forms of child sexual abuse is the concept of exchange – the fact that someone coerces or manipulates a child into engaging in sexual activity **in return for something** they need or desire and/or for the gain of those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. The something received by the child or young person can include both tangible items and/or more intangible ‘rewards’ OR ‘benefits’ such as perceived affection, protection or a sense of value or belonging.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE, including those who can legally consent to have sex. The abuse most frequently impacts upon those of a post-primary age and can be perpetrated by adults or peers, on an individual or group basis.

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the playgroup’s Child Protection Policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

**Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse** can have a profoundly negative effect on a child’s emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children.

Domestic violence and abuse is defined as ‘threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’ Sexual Violence and Abuse is defined as ‘any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual /online perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).’ (Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland A Seven Year Strategy: March 2016).

If it comes to the attention of playgroup staff that Domestic Abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Officer who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

**Female Genital Mutilation** (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as ‘cutting’, ‘female circumcision’ and ‘initiation’. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our playgroup Policy.

**Forced Marriage** A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in CHAPEL ROAD COMMUNITY PLAYGROUP we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

**Children who display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour** Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child’s development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a playgroup we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as ‘healthy’, ‘problematic’ or ‘sexually harmful’. Healthy sexual behaviour will normally have no need for intervention, however consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a playgroup setting. Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. Alternatively, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA CPSS may be required. We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2016/05 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

**What is Harmful Sexualised Behaviour?**

Harmful sexualised behaviour is any behaviour of a sexual nature that takes place when:

* There is no informed consent by the victim; and/or
* the perpetrator uses threat (verbal, physical or emotional) to coerce, threaten or intimidate the victim
* Harmful sexualised behaviour can include: Using age inappropriate sexually explicit words and phrases.
* Inappropriate touching.
* Using sexual violence or threats.
* Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older - particularly if there is more than two years’ difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not.
* However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them - for example, if the older child is disabled.

Sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a Child Protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the playgroups positive behaviour Policy but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

Harmful sexualised behaviour will always require intervention and in our playgroup we will refer to our Child Protection Policy and, seek the support that is available from the CPSS.

**E-safety/Internet Abuse**

Online safety means acting and staying safe when using digital technologies. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, social environments and apps, and using games consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in playgroups and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

In January 2014, the SBNI published its report ‘An exploration of e-safety messages to young people, parents and practitioners in Northern Ireland’ which identified the associated risks around online safety under four categories:

* **Content risks**: the child or young person is exposed to harmful material.
* **Contact risks**: the child or young person participates in adult initiated online activity.
* **Conduct risks**: the child or young person is a perpetrator or victim in peer‑to‑peer exchange.
* **Commercial risks**: the child or young person is exposed to inappropriate commercial advertising, marketing schemes or hidden costs.

We in Chapel Road Community Playgroup have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The playgroup’s actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils’ welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the playgroup or on playgroup-organised activities.

**Sexting** is the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobile or over the internet. There are two aspects to Sexting:

**Sexting between individuals in a relationship**

Pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share ‘indecent images’ of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual relationship) and in these cases we will contact local police on 101 for advice and guidance. We may also seek advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service.

Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all of the circumstances and it is not necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a young person from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of a sexual image.

**Sharing an inappropriate image with intent to cause distress**

If a pupil has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that it is **not forwarded to anyone else**. Playgroups are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individuals consent.

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the Child Protection procedures of the playgroup will be followed.

**Appendix 2**

**Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

* **Children with a disability**

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging Child Protection issues.

Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

* **Children with limited fluency in English**

As with children with a special educational need, children who are not fluent in English should be given the chance to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred.

Designated Teachers should work with their SEN co-ordinators along with playgroup staff with responsibility for newcomer pupils, seeking advice from the EA’s Inclusion and Diversity Service to identify and respond to any particular communication needs that a child may have. All playgroups should try to create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

* **Pre-playgroup provision**

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. In addition to the above, staff will follow our Intimate Care Policy and procedures in consultation with the child’s parent[s]/carer[s]

* **Looked After Children**

In consultation with other agencies and professionals, a Health and Social Care Trust may determine that a child or young person’s welfare cannot be safeguarded if they remain at home. In these circumstances, a child may be accommodated through a voluntary arrangement with the persons with parental responsibility for the child or the HSCT may make an application to the Court for a Care Order to place the child or young person in an alternative placement provided by the Trust. The HSCT will then make arrangements for the child to be looked after, either permanently or temporarily. It is important that the views of children, young people and their parents and/or others with parental responsibility for the looked child are taken into account when decisions are made.

A member of playgroup staff will attend LAC meetings and will provide a written report. Where necessary, playgroup support will be put in place for the child/young person. Information will be shared with relevant staff on a need to know basis.

* **Children / young people who go missing**

Children and young people who go missing come from all backgrounds and communities and are known to be at greater risk of harm. This includes risks of being sexually abused or exploited although children and young people may also become homeless or a victim or perpetrator of crime. Those who go missing from their family home may have no involvement with services as not all children and young people who run away or go missing from their family home have underlying issues within the family, or are reported to the police as missing.

The patterns of going missing may include overnight absences or those who have infrequent unauthorised absences of short time duration. When a child or young person returns, having been missing for a period, we should be alert to the possibility that they may have been harmed and to any behaviours or relationships or other indicators that children and young people may have been abused.

Playgroup staff will work in partnership with those who look after the child or young person who goes missing and, if appropriate, will complete a risk assessment. Current playgroup policies will apply e.g. attendance, safeguarding, relationships and sexuality education.

* **Young people in supported accommodation**

Staff will work in partnership with those agencies involved with young people leaving care and those living in supported accommodation and will provide pastoral support as necessary.

* **Young people who are homeless**

If we become aware that a young person in our playgroup is homeless we will share this information with Social Services whose role is to carry out a comprehensive needs and risk assessment. We will contribute to the assessment and attend multi-disciplinary meetings.

* **Separated, unaccompanied and trafficked children and young people**

**Separated children** and young people are those who have been separated from their parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver. **Unaccompanied children** and young people are those seeking asylum without the presence of a legal guardian. Consideration must be given to the fact that separated or unaccompanied children may be a victim of human trafficking.

**Child Trafficking** is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child or young person, whether by force or not, by a third person or group, for the purpose of different types of exploitation.

If we become aware of a child or young person who may be separated, unaccompanied or a victim of human trafficking we in Chapel Road Community Playgroup will immediately follow our safeguarding and Child Protection procedures

* **Children of parents with additional support needs**

Children and young people can be affected by the disability of those caring for them. Parents, carers or siblings with disabilities may have additional support needs which impact on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the family, possibly affecting their education or physical and emotional development. It is important that any action playgroup staff take to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm in these circumstances encompasses joint working between specialist disability and children’s social workers and other professionals and agencies involved in providing services to adult family members. This will assist us in ensuring the welfare of the children and young people in the family is promoted and they are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

Where it is known or suspected that parents or carers have impaired ability to care for a child, the safeguarding team will give consideration to the need for a Child Protection response in addition to the provision of family support and intervention.

* **Gender identity issues and sexual orientation**

Young people from the LGBTQ community may face particular difficulties which could make them more vulnerable to harm. These difficulties could range from intolerance and homophobic bullying from others to difficulties for the young person themselves in exploring and understanding their sexuality. At such times young people may be more vulnerable to predatory advances from adults seeking to exploit or abuse them. This could impede a young person’s ability or willingness to raise concerns if they feel they are at risk or leave young people exposed to contact with people who would exploit them.

As a staff working with young people from the LGBT community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation.

* **Boarding Playgroups and residential settings**

Children in the above settings are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We will ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and trained in accordance with DE guidance.

* **Work experience, Playgroup trips and educational visits**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the playgroup setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits, playgroup trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

**Children/young people’s behaviours**

* **Peer Abuse**

Children and young people may be at risk of physical, sexual and emotional bullying and abuse by their peers. Such abuse should always be taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult. Where a child or young person has been harmed by another, all playgroup staff should be aware of their responsibilities in relation to both children and young people who perpetrate the abuse as well as those who are victims of it and, where necessary, should contribute to an inter-disciplinary and multi-agency response.

* **Self-Harm**

Self-harm encompasses a wide range of behaviours and things that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way, which are damaging. It may indicate a temporary period of emotional pain or distress, or deeper mental health issues which may result in the development of a progressive pattern of worsening self-harm that may ultimately result in death by misadventure or suicide. Self-harm may involve abuse of substances such as alcohol or drugs, including both illegal and/or prescribed drugs.

Self-harming behaviours may indicate that a child or young person has suffered abuse; however this is not always the case. Playgroup staff should share concerns about a child or young person who is self-harming with a member of the safeguarding team who will seek advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals including those in the non-statutory sector to make informed assessments of risk in relation to self-harming behaviours.

* **Suicidal Ideation**

Staff must act without delay if they have concerns about a child or young person who presents as being suicidal as it is important that children and young people who communicate thoughts of suicide or engage in para-suicidal behaviours are seen urgently by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, including those in the non-statutory sector, to ensure they are taken seriously, treated with empathy, kindness and understanding and informed assessments of risk and needs can be completed as a matter of priority.

**How a Parent can make a Complaint**

**Appendix 3**

If a parent has a potential *Child Protection* concern:

**I have a concern about my/a child’s safety**

**I can talk to the Designated Child Protection Officer Mrs Devine**

**Tel: 028 7131 8838**

**If I am still concerned, I can talk to the Playgroup Leader Miss Blee**

**Tel: 028 7131 8838**

**At any time, I can talk to the local Children’s Services Gateway Team**

**Tel: 028 71314090**

**If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the**

**Management Committee Child Protection Officer Miss Ann Kerr**

**Tel: 028 7134 1419**

**If I am still concerned I can contact the NI Public Services**

**Tel: 0800 343 424**

**Procedure where the Playgroup has concerns, or has been given information, about possible abuse by someone other than a member of staff**

***After 5pm to 9am, 24hr service at weekends/bank holidays***

**I can talk to the Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS)**

**Tel: 028 9504 9999**

**Member of staff completes the Note of Concern on what has been observed or shared and must**

**ACT PROMPTLY**

**Source of concern is notified that the Playgroup will follow up appropriately on the issues raised.**

**Appendix 4**

**Staff member discusses concerns with the Designated CP Officer or Deputy Designated CP Officer in her absence and provides note of concern.**

**Designated CP Officer should consult with the Leader or other relevant staff before deciding upon action to be taken, always taking care to avoid undue delay. If required, advice may be sought from a CPSS officer.**

**Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed as to the action taken. The Designated CP Officer will maintain a written record of all decisions and actions taken and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.**

Child Protection referral is required

**Designated CP Officer seeks consent of the parent/carer and/or the child (if they are competent to give this) unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm then telephones the Children’s Services Gateway Team and/or the PSNI if a child is at immediate risk. She submits a completed UNOCINI referral form within 24 hours.**

Child Protection referral is not required

**Playgroup may consider other options including monitoring the situation within an agreed timescale; signposting or referring the child/parent/carers to appropriate support services such as the Children’s Services Gateway Team or local Family Support Hub with parental consent, and child/young person’s consent (where appropriate).**

**Designated CP Officer clarifies/discusses concern with child/ parent/carers and decides if a child protection referral is or is not required.**

**Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff**

**Appendix 5**

**Key Points**

**Lead individual learns of an allegation against a member of staff and informs the Chair/Vice Chair of the Management Committee as appropriate.**

**Appendix 6**

**Guidance on the Next Steps**

**Lead individual then establishes the facts, seeks advice from the key agencies as appropriate, usually through informal discussion.**

**Possible Outcomes**

**Following on from establishing the facts, seeking advice from Key Agencies and discussion with the Chair and/or Management Committee to agree a way forward from the options below.**

**Alternatives to precautionary suspension imposed**

**Precautionary suspension under Child Protection procedures imposed**

**Allegation addressed through relevant disciplinary procedures.**

**Precautionary suspension is not appropriate and the matter is concluded.**

 **CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO DESIGNATED OFFICER**

|  |
| --- |
| Name of Pupil:  |
| Year Group:  |
| Date, time of incident / disclosure:  |
| Circumstances of incident / disclosure:  |
| Nature and description of concern:  |
| Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom: |
| Action taken at the time:  |
| Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:  |
| Any further action taken:  |
| Written report passed to Designated CP Officer: Yes: No: If ‘No’ state reason:  |
| Date and time of report to the Designated CP Officer:  |
| Written note from staff member placed on pupil’s Child Protection file Yes NoIf ‘No’ state reason: |

Name of staff member making the report: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Designated CP Officer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Addendum**

**Chapel Road Community Playgroup**

***COVID-19 Child Protection Measures***

From week commencing 1st September 2020 we will be welcoming back more children to our pre-school. We have updated this policy to reflect the current government guidance on safeguarding our pupils during the pandemic.

This addendum to our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy sets out details of our safeguarding arrangements for:

**Safeguarding priority**

During the pandemic the safeguarding of all children within our Playgroup, whether they are currently at home or in attendance, continues to be our priority. The following fundamental safeguarding principles remain the same:

* the best interests of children continue to come first
* if anyone in our playgroup has a safeguarding concern, they will act immediately
* a designated safeguarding lead or deputy will always be available
* no unsuitable people will be allowed to gain access to children
* children should continue to be protected when they are online.

**Current Playgroup position**

* We understand that the present situation regarding COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a highly concerning issue for members, staff, parents, families and children.
* We wish to reassure you that we are here to support you.
* We are closely monitoring this continually evolving situation and actively engaging with key relevant Departmental and agency representatives on associated issues.
* We continue to encourage you to regularly review relevant advice and guidance being issued by the appropriate agencies and authorities.

***This will continue to be a rapidly developing situation and during these unprecedented times we will be continuing to issue regular communications.***

All staff and volunteers attending on site will complete an induction to ensure they are aware of safeguarding risks and know how to act if they have concerns.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities for safeguarding in the Playgroup remain in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Whenever possible, our DCPO or deputy DCPO will be available on site during the day. Where this is not possible, we will:

* have a trained or deputy available by phone and/or online video; **or**
* Where our DCPO or a deputy DCPO cannot be on site, then in addition to one of the above options we will also ensure a member of the senior management team takes responsibility for co-ordinating safeguarding on site.

The DCPO or a deputy will provide support to pastoral staff to ensure that contact is maintained with children (and their families) who are not yet returning to the Playgroup. Where possible staff will try and speak directly to children to help identify any concerns.

**Vulnerable children**

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children with an ILP'S.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend playgroup, so long as they do not have underlying health conditions that put them at risk. Where a parent does not want their child to attend playgroup, and their child is considered vulnerable, we will discuss this with the social worker and explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Those with an Individual Learning Plans will be risk-assessed in consultation with the local authority and parents to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a playgroup place in order to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. This could include, if necessary, carers, therapists or clinicians visiting the home to provide any essential services. Many children and young people with ILP'S can safely remain at home.

We will encourage our vulnerable children and young people to attend the Playgroup, including remotely if needed.

The Leader, DCPO (and deputies) are aware of the most vulnerable children with the setting, and have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edge of receiving children’s social care support.

We will continue to work with children’s social workers and the local authority for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

**Increased Vulnerability or Risk**

Negative experiences and distressing life events, such as the current circumstances, can affect the mental health of pupils and their parents. Staff will be aware of this in setting expectations. Where we are providing for children of critical workers and vulnerable children on site, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

Our staff and volunteers will be aware of the mental health of [children](https://safeguarding.network/safeguarding-resources/specific-risks-children-additional-needs/mental-health/) and their [parents and carers](https://safeguarding.network/safeguarding-resources/parental-issues/parental-mental-ill-health/) and will contact the DCPO or a deputy if they have any concerns.

**Attendance**

We will work with and support families and pupils to return to the Playgroup where attendance is appropriate. Where a child is expected but does not arrive at pre-school, the DCPO or a deputy will attempt to contact the parents through various methods, such as telephone, FaceTime, Skype or by contact a relative in the first instance.

Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place, we will notify their social worker.

**Reporting concerns about children or staff**

The importance of all staff and volunteers acting immediately on any safeguarding concerns remains. Staff and volunteers will continue to follow our Child Protection procedures and advise the DCPO of any concerns they have about any child, including those who are not attending.

The varied arrangements in place as a result of the COVID-19 measures do not reduce the risks that children may face from staff or volunteers. As such, it remains extremely important that any allegations of abuse made against staff or volunteers attending are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently and in accordance with our Allegations Against Staff Policy.

Staff and volunteers may identify new safeguarding concerns about a child as they see them in person again. In these circumstances staff will follow our Child Protection procedures, as set out.

**Staff training and induction**

For the duration of the COVID-19 measures, our DCPO and deputy DCPOs are unlikely to receive their refresher training. In line with government guidance, our trained DSLs and deputy DSLs will be classed as trained even if they cannot receive this training.

All playgroup staff have received safeguarding training and are currently all up to date. When new staff are recruited or volunteers join, they will receive a safeguarding induction in accordance with our Child Protection Policy.

If staff from another setting attend the playgroup site then, in line with government guidance, we will not undertake any additional safeguarding checks if the setting providing those staff confirm that:

* the individual has been subject to an enhanced DBS and children’s barred list check and, that in the opinion of that setting, nothing resulted from those checks that provided any caused for concern
* there are no safeguarding investigations into the conduct of that individual
* the individual remains suitable to work with children.

For those staff, we will judge on a case-by-case basis the level of safeguarding induction required.

**Safer recruitment/volunteers and movement of staff**

It remains essential that people who are unsuitable are not allowed to enter the children’s workforce or gain access to children.

In response to COVID-19, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has made changes to its guidance on standard and enhanced DBS ID checking to minimise the need for face-to-face contact.

For volunteers we will continue to follow the checking and risk assessment process. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been checked be left unsupervised or allowed to engage in regulated activity.

It is essential from a safeguarding perspective that we are aware, on any given day, which staff/volunteers are on our school site and that the appropriate checks have been carried out on those individuals. We will continue to maintain a record during these measures to ensure we have this awareness.

In accordance with our Child Protection policy, we will continue to discharge our legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult.

**Online safety**

It is likely that children will be using the internet and engaging with social media far more during this time. Our staff are aware of the signs of cyberbullying and other online risks and our filtering and monitoring software remains in use during this time to safeguarding and support children. Our staff will follow the process for online safety set out in our Child Protection Policy.

Staff who interact with children online will continue to look out for signs a child may be at risk. If a staff member is concerned about a child, that staff member will follow the correct process and report that concern to the DCPO or to a deputy DCPO.

We will continue to consider the safety of the children when they are online. Our staff will continue to follow our Code of Conduct when engaging.

***See Internet Safety Policy and Procedure.***

**Mental Health**

Negative experiences and distressing life events can affect the mental health of children and their parents. Mental health issues can bring about changes in a child’s behaviour or emotional state which can be displayed in a range of different ways, for example being fearful or withdrawn; aggressive or oppositional; or excessive clinginess.

As more children attend playgroup from 1st September 2020, we will ensure appropriate support is in place for them.

**New children at the Playgroup**

Children may join the Playgroup from other settings. When they do, we will seek from those settings the relevant welfare and child protection information. This is relevant for all children that join us, but it will be especially important where children are vulnerable.

For vulnerable children we will ensure we understand the reasons for the vulnerability and any arrangements in place to support them.

Ideally this will happen before a child arrives but where that is not possible it will happen as soon as reasonably practicable.

Any exchanges of information will ideally happen at DCPO (or deputy) level.

The DCPO will undertake a risk assessment based on the information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff needs to know the information.

**Supporting children not in playgroup**

Where the DCPO has identified a child to be on the edge of social care support, will ensure that a communication plan is in place to support that child. Details of that plan will be recorded in the safeguarding file for that child. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current during these measures.

1. Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)