

DIY DOCUMENTS: SAFEGUARDING



Laura Henry explains how early years settings can pen and embed an effective child protection policy and procedure...



One of the most important documents that a setting needs to have in place is a safeguarding and child protection policy and procedure. But what should you include and how should you share it with staff and stakeholders?

Firstly, it's important to remember that a policy and a procedure are two separate pieces of information, although they could be written in one document. A policy should state the overriding principle of the document and set out what you seek to do, while a procedure should set out the steps you take to adhere to what is stated and should be followed, especially if it links to legislation.

You should include an overarching statement of your commitment to

safeguarding children, consideration of their health, development, safety, welfare and wellbeing, and how these are paramount at all times. Clearly state that first and foremost you are responsible to the child and how this reflects the 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' guidance (downloadable at ow.ly/zeaPq). Every educator should have a copy of this important guidance and the links to the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the EYFS 2014. You should also explain how you work in partnership with your local safeguarding children's board.

The policy and procedure should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in line with new legislation and guidance, and at least annually. The policy and procedure should also demonstrate your understanding as to how Ofsted regulates safeguarding and should also be reflected in your SEF.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (DSO)

Your document should explain the role of the DSO: this person needs to be experienced in safeguarding and should have knowledge, expertise and skills in this area. He or she should have attended robust training in safeguarding and be able to disseminate and cascade this to other staff in the team.

Ideally, the DSO should have a clear job description that sets out how the role must be carried out and his or her responsibilities and commitment. These include:

- how he/she works with other professionals, children services and safeguarding children team and Ofsted;
- identifying professional development for individuals and the setting as a whole.

YOUR POLICY AND PROCEDURE IS YOUR INITIAL OBLIGATION IN KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE AND THEIR WELLBEING A PRIORITY

about the author

Laura Henry is an award-winning expert in early years education. She has performed a wide range of roles such as nursery manager, Ofsted inspector, teacher and curriculum manager, as well as serving on a number of national and international forums and working parties.

It's advisable that there is a deputy DSO in place who is equally knowledgeable and able to step in in the DSO's absence.

CHILDREN

Your document should include information regarding how you can appropriately support children, according to their age, stage and ability, to have an awareness of how to protect themselves. You should explain how staff may use 'special key persons' to collaborate with small groups of children, for example, using open-ended questions such as, "What makes us feel safe in nursery?", and how the setting encourages children to co-create their own rules and guidelines in keeping emotionally and physically safe. This links to children's personal, social and emotional development.

PARENTS

The document should inform parents of your commitment and what your role is as a provider to safeguard children. Ideally, every parent should be given a summary of the policy and procedure, so you should consider how parents will receive this, for example, as a paper copy or an e-copy. If possible this should be given during the settling in period whilst reiterating to parents that they can voice, at any time, any concerns that they may have, without fear or favour.

The document should explain how you would work with other professionals (and parents, wherever possible) if the setting has a concern relating to a child or parent, and that your main priority is always the welfare of the child. Outline when you would make a referral, for example, if there was an immediate concern regarding the child's welfare or safety; this is especially important if the parent appears mentally or physically unwell or incapacitated in any way.

Describe how this links to your confidentiality statement stating that information relating to any child will not be made public knowledge and that it will only be shared with appropriate professionals where necessary.

RECRUITMENT

The document should explain your recruitment procedures; that you clearly state in advertisements and other recruitment

literature that a full DBS is carried out and relevant checks are carried out to safeguard children and their families. Outline that interview questions will include an element of safeguarding and will involve value-based questions. Explain that staff will need to sign an annual declaration regarding their suitability to continue work with children, linking to any known convictions or cautions. This includes that they have a duty to let you know if and when their suitability to work with children and families may come into question. Cross reference to your effective and safe recruitment policy and procedure, relating to relevant checks as an example.

INDUCTION

Your document should explain how safeguarding documentation is shared with staff during induction; that you spend time and go over the details of the policy and procedure and check that they do understand their professional and personal responsibility for safeguarding. Outline checks that you make to ensure that any gaps in staff knowledge are filled.

CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The document should outline how staff receive regular professional development regarding safeguarding, noting as well as regular face-to-face training including peer-to-peer support, coaching, mentoring, reading journals and research, discussions within staff meetings and supervision.

SAFE CARING

The document should demonstrate how safe caring is linked to the key person role and its importance for educators, students and volunteers. It should be detailed in your Nursery Code of Professional Practice and your key principles of professional practice.

Procedures to take when a child protection concern arises

These should be written clearly and in plain English so that everyone knows what to do to keep children safe. The DSO should ideally take the lead in this. Clarity is needed as to why the procedures have been instigated, linked to the signs and symptoms of abuse, which should also be included in the policy.

Consideration should also be given to children and families who experience domestic violence and the impact that this may have on children's welfare and wellbeing.

Allegations against staff (including agency), students and volunteers

Your document should explain that these will need to be investigated in strict accordance

with the Safeguarding and Children's team of Children's Services and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Ofsted.

Confidentiality issues must be explained, and the fact that only those who need to know that a suspension has been made, such as the Independent Safeguarding Board or other relevant professional body, will be informed if any staff, student or volunteer is dismissed or suspended on grounds of misconduct.

State that under no circumstances would your setting allow a member of staff, student or volunteer to be 'let go' or resign where an allegation has been made and an investigation undertaken.

WHISTLE-BLOWING

You should also include your whistle-blowing policy and procedure, which forms part of the wider safeguarding policy and procedure. It is imperative that staff know the reporting systems, especially who to contact and why.

Other considerations need to be included regarding security and how you protect children from unwanted visitors. You should state how children are kept safe on outings and how your robust policies and procedures make sure that children are safe when outside of the setting.

Your document should include your ICT policy as well as mobile phone policy. It's essential to note any device that can record and store images that staff, parents and visitors may have on their person.

Lastly, your policy should be dated and the person who has signed the policy should state their full name, job role and include the date for review.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, and your policy and procedure is your initial obligation in keeping children safe and their wellbeing a priority.

FURTHER READING

- Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2014: ow.ly/zer8G
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: ow.ly/zeqSY
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006: legislation.gov.uk
- The Munro Review of Child Protection: ow.ly/zeqFq
- Birmingham Serious Case Review: ow.ly/zemhi
- Plymouth Serious Case Review: ow.ly/zemWS
- NSPCC: nspcc.org.uk
- Plain English Campaign: plainenglish.co.uk