

Child Protection & Welfare Policy

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Askea Community Childcare Centre is committed to ensuring that all children attending are respected, protected and kept safe from harm. Management and staff, volunteers and students in the service recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and will endeavour to safeguard children at all times.

Principle of Child Protection & Welfare Policy

This policy is underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991 and Early Years Services Regulations 2016

Procedure for Child Protection & Welfare

- Complying with “Children First” National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children and all regulatory requirements including Garda vetting and referencing.
- Having a reporting procedure in place to respond to concerns for children’s welfare and safety.
- Having a confidentiality statement in place.
- Having a code of behaviour for staff, volunteers and students.
- Having a safe recruitment policy.
- Having a procedure for the management/supervision of staff.
- Having a procedure to respond to accidents.
- Having a procedure to respond to complaints.
- Having a staff disciplinary procedure.

As part of the child protection policy Askea Community Childcare Centre will:

- Appoint a designated liaison person and a deputy liaison person for dealing with child protection concerns. These staff members will have their names and photographs placed in reception so staff, parents and children are aware of whom to contact if there are any child protection issues or concerns.
- Ensure that staff attend child protection training within the past 3 years such as “Tusla Always Children First”, to enable them to recognise the signs of abuse and the correct procedure to report their concerns or to deal with a disclosure made to them.
- Provide induction training on the centre’s child protection policy for staff, students and volunteers.
- Provide supervision and support for staff and volunteers in contact with children.
- Review the child protection policy at least once a year.
- Share information about that policy with parents and families.

Note: any person reporting a suspicion of child abuse in good faith shall have immunity from civil liability under the “Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.”

Definitions and Indicators of abuse

There are four different types of abuse:

1. Neglect. Including wilful and circumstantial Neglect.
2. Emotional Abuse.
3. Physical Abuse.
4. Sexual Abuse.

Neglect:

“An omission where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to affection from adults, medical care.”

(Children first 2.2.1)

Signs &Symptoms.

- Abandonment or desertion- Parent does not collect a child and cannot be contacted.
- Children persistently left alone-without supervision.
- Lack of warmth.
- Lack of suitable clothing.
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger.
- Persistent failure to attend school.
- Non-organic failure to thrive- child not gaining weight due to malnutrition but also due to emotional deprivation.
- Failure to provide adequate care for a child’s medical problems. (children first,p,125)

Emotional:

“Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between the parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

(Children first 2.3.1)

Signs &symptoms:

- Rejection.
- Lack of praise and encouragement.
- Lack of comfort and love.
- Lack of attachment.
- Lack of proper stimulation.
- Lack of continuity of care.
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment.
- Family conflicts and/or violence.
- Inappropriate expectations of a child’s behaviour relative to his/her age or stage of development.
- Every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused.

(Children first, p, 126)

Physical:

“Physical abuse is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust.

(Children first 2.4.1)

Signs & Symptoms:

- Shaking.
- Bruising.
- Fractures.
- Swollen joints.
- Burns/scalds.
- Cuts/abrasions.
- Damage to body organs.
- Poisonings.
- Failure to thrive.
- Coma/unconsciousness.
- Death.

(Children first, p. 126/127/128)

Sexual:

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

(Children first 2.5.1)

Signs & Symptoms:

- Bleeding from vagina/anus.
- Difficulty/pain passing urine/faeces.
- Vaginal discharge or warts/rash in genital area.
- Hints about sexual activity.
- Age inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour.
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour.
- Noticeable changes in mood/behaviour. Child becomes withdrawn, fearful or acting out sexual play with peers or toys.
- Bed wetting/soiling.
- Psychosomatic complaints, pains, headaches, stomach aches.

(Children first, p.130)

Reasonable Grounds for Concern that a child is the victim of abuse

- A disclosure from a child in relation to abuse by an adult or child/adolescent.
- An account by a person who witnessed the abuse of a child.
- Evidence of an injury or behaviour which indicated abuse and is unlikely to have been caused any other way.
- Evidence of injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse, but also where another or innocent explanation is given, however other factors and indicators are present to support the concerns of abuse.

- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect or lack of adequate supervision.
- Retrospective disclosure-A disclosure by an adult that they were abused as a child by someone that now has contact with children.
- Concern about the practice of a colleague in the service.

(Children first p. 38-40)

Guidelines for Responding to a Disclosure by a Child

- Stay calm and listen. Give the child time to say what he/she wants to say.
- Listen carefully and attentively. Take the child seriously.
- Don't ask leading questions or make suggestions.
- Don't stop the child recalling significant events but don't start to investigate or make the child repeat the story if unnecessary.
- Don't express opinions about the child or family members.
- Reassure the child but never make promises to keep it a secret.
- Explain that you will need to discuss this with someone else.
- Record the disclosure as carefully as possible in the child's own words, as soon as possible after receiving the disclosure.
- Inform the DLP. Don't delay or do nothing.
- Maintain confidentiality. The information discussed should only be shared at this stage with the DLP and the manager.
- Following the disclosure by the child remain supportive to the child and maintain a positive relationship.
- Any further disclosures by the child should be treated as a new disclosure and responded to as indicated above.

(Children first p. 37-40)

Helpful things to say to the child

- I'm glad you told me, I'm sorry it happened.
- It is not your fault. I'm sorry it happened.
- You were right to tell, it's ok to tell.
- I care and I will try to help but I might have to tell someone else who can help.
- The abuser was wrong to do that.

Procedure for Reporting Concerns to Tusla Social Work Department

If a Staff Member, Volunteer or student has a concern about the welfare or possible abuse of a child at Askea Community Childcare Centre this procedure will be followed.

1. The staff member, volunteer or student will record the concern and discuss/inform the Designated Liaison Person.
2. The Designated Liaison Person will consider the concern and ring the duty social worker for advice. The concern will be discussed without identifying the child or family.

3. The Designated Liaison Person will follow the advice of the duty social worker and make a report on the standard reporting form if advised to do so.
4. The Designated Liaison Person records the report and procedures followed for Askea Community Childcare records in a confidential manner.
5. The Designated Liaison Person then informs the parents that a report is being made to Tusla and An Garda Siochana, unless doing so could put the child in question at future risk. If unsure the DLP should seek further advice from the Duty Social Worker.

Note: There is an explicit time frame for making reports or seeking advice. Reports must be made within 24 hours or at the start of the next working day in the case of a weekend or bank holiday.

The Board and Management of Askea Community Childcare Centre recognise that it may be difficult for a staff member, volunteer or student to raise a child protection or welfare concern and the need therefore to support the person who reported the child protection or welfare concern.

If The Designated Liaison Person decides not to pass on a concern raised by a member of staff, volunteer or student, she shall inform them of this in writing indicating the reasons for her decision. The DLP will advise the individual that he/she may proceed and make the report themselves and that the provision of The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 will apply.

Where it has been decided by the Designated Liaison Person that the concerns do not meet reasonable grounds for concern, these will be documented in our incident books and observation logs and kept confidentially and securely for future reference as per the Askea Community Childcare Centre policy on Record Keeping.

The Designated Liaison Person for Askea Community Childcare Centre is _____

Contact Details: _____

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is _____

Contact Details: _____

Askea Community Childcare Centre Safe Management of Activities

In conjunction with the Child Care Act 1991 [Early years Services] Regulations 2016

Planning Activities / Knowing the Children

- Registration forms for all children which will include medical details, any special needs, consent for medical attention, permission for photographs and emergency contact numbers for parents or a person designated with "parental responsibility."
- Attendance Register.
- Accident Book.
- Authorisation/parental consent forms.
- Adopting Health and Safety Policies.
- Required standards of premises and equipment.
- Heating and ventilation.
- Sanitation facilities.
- Fire Precautions.

- First Aid Facilities.
- Regular maintenance of equipment.
- Adequate provision of insurance cover for children, staff, volunteers

Supervision of Children

Practical Matters, such as:

- Number of participants
- Age and range
- Type of activities
- Environment where the activity is undertaken
- Particular needs of individual participants.
- Organising programmes well in advance.
- Children well supervised.

Knowing staff & volunteers

- Follow a thorough recruitment procedure.
- Keep secure records of details provided at the time of recruitment.
- Have a roster which should be clearly displayed so that everyone is aware who is on the premises.
- Keep a record of complaints/incidents about or involving workers, children/young people or parents.
- Acknowledge stress and assist staff in strategies for coping with it.
- No unrestricted access by parents to children. Parents should be subject to the same recruitment and supervision procedure as staff and volunteers.

Askea Community Childcare Centre Procedure

For dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Employees & Volunteers

The Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children advise that there are two procedures that need to be followed.

1. Reporting procedure in respect of the child.
2. The procedure for dealing with the employee.

In all instances the welfare of the child shall be the paramount consideration. There shall be no delay in reporting to Tusla or on Garda Síochána.

It is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the employment issues.

1. Reporting procedure in respect of the child

- The designated person should follow the standard procedures for dealing with concerns/disclosures of abuse and reporting to Tusla.
- The designated person should also inform a designated member of the Board of Management without delay.

2. The procedure for dealing with the employee

- The manager informs the employee/volunteer that an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation.

- The employee will be given an opportunity to respond. The manager will record the response and pass on the information when making the standard report to Tusla. The employee will be informed of how the information they provide will or may be used.
- Further action will be guided by the employment contract and the rules of natural justice- the first priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. Protective measures will be undertaken, proportionate to the level of risk to the child. (Children first p. 111)
- Follow up action on the allegation/concern will be taken in consultation with the investigating agencies; Tusla or/and An Garda Siochanna. After these consultations the employee will be informed of their future position by the Manager and designated member of the Board of Management and an agreed procedure will be followed.
- Askea Childcare will maintain close liaison with Tusla and/or An Garda Siochanna during the course of the investigation.
- Askea Childcare recognise that parents of the child involved will need to be kept up to date with any planned actions or actions taken, taking into consideration the principles of natural justice and confidentiality.

Note: All preschool services should have a disciplinary procedure in place and may need to seek legal advice in relation to allegations against staff. This procedure should be cross referenced with any existing employment policies.

Other Askea Community Childcare Centre Policies relevant to the Child Protection Policy

Confidentiality Statement

It is the policy of Askea Community Childcare to keep confidential all personal information about families, children and staff in this service.

However, an exception to this is when child protection concerns arise, in which case the organisation cannot keep such information secret. In this situation information will be shared on a need to know basis in the best interest of the protection and welfare of the child.

The Board and Management of Askea Community Childcare recognise that parents and children have a right to know if personal information about them is being shared with outside agencies, unless doing so could put the child at further risk or harm.

Management, staff, volunteers/students in this service will be advised of our confidentiality policy and will be required to sign up to it.

Records

Keeping accurate and up to date records in relation to children, staff and service provision is essential in order to comply with the Childcare (Preschool Services) Reg. 2006. The Preschool inspector will have access to files for inspection purposes.

Parents may have access to the files and records of their own children on request but may not have access to information about any other child.

Only staff involved with a particular child should have access to confidential files.

Where there is a welfare or child protection concern, observations and records are kept on an ongoing basis and information shares with Tusla social work services as appropriate.

Note: Confidential files are kept in a highly secure fashion, e.g. locked filing cabinet/drawer.

Induction Training and supervision

- All management, staff volunteers and students are briefed on the Askea Child Protection Policy as part of their induction training.
- All management, staff, volunteers and students are required to sign up to the Askea Child protection Policy.
- All management, staff and volunteers are encouraged to attend Child Protection training and any other relevant training as identified.
- Staff will be provided with information in relation to particular skills training to encourage professional development and best practice.
- Regular supervision and support will be available to new and existing staff through one to one meetings and staff meetings.

Code of Behaviour

Askea Community Childcare is of the belief that staff and volunteers should have a child centred holistic approach to working with children. All staff, volunteers should have a clear understanding of what is acceptable with respect to their behaviour with children. This is very important to protect children from harm and staff, children and parents from misinterpretation of their actions.

We aim to do this by:

- Valuing and respecting all children as individuals.
- Listening to children.
- Involving children in decision making, where appropriate.
- Encouraging children.
- Having an anti-bullying policy
- Promoting positive behaviour.
- Having an accident/incident policy.

We do not:

- Engage in, or allow inappropriate touching in any form.
- Verbally abuse or physically punish any child.
- Condone bullying or abusive behaviour by staff, volunteers or other children.
- Undertake intimate care needs without consulting and agreeing arrangements with the child and their parents.
- Engage in practices that demean or humiliate children.

We are aware:

- Of developing favouritism or becoming overly involved with any one child.
- That while physical contact is a valid way of comforting or reassuring a child, it should take place in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult in an open environment.
- Of the need to be sensitive to the diverse cultures in Askea Childcare.
- That children should be supported and encouraged to let staff know if they have any complaints, concerns or difficulties.

Recruitment Procedure

Askea Community Childcare will ensure that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected by undertaking the following:

- Devising a clear job description which outlines the qualifications, skills and experience needed.
- Advertising widely using the agreed job description.
- Requesting candidates to supply information on an application form, which should include information on, personal details, past and current work, volunteering experience, qualifications or skills relevant to the post.
- Interviews are conducted by a panel and are consistent and transparent.
- Two written references are supplied and are followed up with a phone call to verify that they are bone fide. This is also an opportunity to ascertain there if there has been any concerns that have not been outlined in the written reference.
- Garda Vetting is obligatory in relation to all staff, volunteers, students, committee members and contract workers entering the service.
- Two forms of identification including photo id, address and signature such as Passport/Drivers Licence will be supplied.
- All staff will have a signed Employment Contract.
- All staff will read and sign the Employees Handbook.
- A probationary period is written into the contract.
- Volunteers and students will not be left unsupervised at any time.

Complaints Procedure

- Askea Community Childcare Centre aim to work in partnership with parents by seeking parent's views and encouraging parents to participate in any decision-making in relation to the service.
- All complaints are taken seriously and dealt with in a fair and confidential manner.
- We endeavour to resolve complaints quickly and informally through discussion with parents and members of staff as appropriate.
- Parents will be made aware that there is a complaints procedure in operation and will receive a copy of the complaints form as part of the child protection policy.
- Children will be made aware of the complaints procedure in an age appropriate way.

Askea Community Childcare Centre

Procedure to be followed if a Parent / Guardian has a Complaint

If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with any aspect of the Service, they should first of all seek to resolve the issue informally by:

- Discussing the problem with the room leader.
- If the issue is unresolved or reoccurs, parents should put their complaint in writing to the manager.
- If the parent is still not happy with the situation they may put their complaint in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- The Board will then nominate a member to meet with the parents and the room leader (as appropriate) to try to resolve the issue.
- If the issue remains unresolved, it may be necessary for a third party to mediate with the complaint.
- Written records of discussions and agreements made will be kept of this meeting and copies made available to parents, room leader and any other staff that are involved, (as appropriate)
- Complaints must be made within 48 hours of the incident occurring.

Code of Behaviour for Staff

If there is a breach of the Code of Behaviour by staff the disciplinary procedure may be invoked by the Askea management committee.

Child Care Act 1991 [Early Years Services] Regulations 2016

The Tusla Preschool Inspector will be involved in preparing a report in relation to any breach of Early Years Services Regulations.

I have read, understood and will implement the above policy.

Name: _____

Room: _____

This policy was agreed and adopted by Askea Community Childcare Centre.

Date: _____

Signed by _____ on behalf of management

This policy will be reviewed on 1st September 2017 in collaboration with staff and parents