



The Alphabet Before, After & Holiday Club

Registered Charity: 1089318

Child Protection - Policy and Practices (#06)

We intend to create within the Alphabet Club an environment where children are safe from abuse and in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to. In order to achieve this we will:

Appoint a member of staff as the Child Protection Officer

This Officer will have suitable experience, training and expertise, and will be responsible for liaising with social services, the Area Child Protection Committee and Ofsted in any child protection matter.

The Alphabet Club's child protection procedures comply with all relevant legislation and other guidance or advice from the Area Child Protection Committees

The Alphabet Club is committed to reviewing its Child protection policy and procedures at regular intervals. This policy and its procedures will be shared with parent/carers during their child's settling in period.

Exclude known abusers

It will be made clear to applicants for posts within the Alphabet Club that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

All applicants for work within the Alphabet Club, whether voluntary or paid, will be interviewed before an appointment is made and will be asked to provide at least two references. All such references will be followed up. In the case of applicants with unexplained gaps in their employment history, or who have moved rapidly from one job to another, explanations will be sought.

All appointments, both paid and voluntary, will be subject to a probationary period and will not be confirmed unless the Alphabet Club is confident that the applicant can be safely entrusted with children.

Staff support and training

We will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the group to ensure that they recognise the symptoms of possible physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

All staff, students and volunteers are given a copy of the Child Protection policy during their

induction, and have its implications explained to them.

All staff are provided with supervision and management support commensurate with their responsibilities in relation to child protection, and their requirement to maintain caring and safe relationships with children.

Any member of staff, a student or volunteer under investigation for the alleged abuse of a child, will be subject to the provisions of the Staff Disciplinary policy

Prevent abuse by means of good practice

We will endeavour to ensure that all staff understand the Alphabet Club's child protection procedures and have had appropriate training and guidance in the principles of safe caring. To this end:

- Children will be encouraged to develop a sense of autonomy and independence through adult support in making choices and in finding names for their own feelings and acceptable ways to express them. This will enable children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- The layout of the Alphabet Club room(s) will permit constant supervision of all children. When playing outside a minimum of two adults will be present.
- Every effort will be made to avoid or minimise time when members of staff, students or volunteers are left alone with a child. If staff are alone with a child, the door of the room should be kept open and another member of staff should be informed.
- If a child makes inappropriate physical contact with a member of staff, students or volunteer, this will be recorded fully in the Incident Record Book.
- Staff will never carry out a personal task for children that they can do for themselves. Where this is essential, staff will help a child whilst being accompanied by a colleague. Unless a child has a particular need, staff should not accompany children into the toilet. Staff are aware that this and other similar activities could be misconstrued.
- Staff will be mindful of how and where they touch children, given their age and emotional understanding. Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact will be avoided at all times.
- All allegations made by a child against a member of staff will be fully recorded, including any actions taken, in the Incident Record Book. In the event of there being a witness to an incident, they should sign the records to confirm this.

Respond appropriately to suspicions of abuse

Changes in children's behaviour/appearance will be investigated.

Parents will normally be the first point of reference, though suspicions will also be referred as appropriate to the Child Protection Team "ESCB"

All such suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential, shared only with those who need to know. The people most commonly involved will be the member of staff/key worker, the Club Co-ordinator and the Trustees of the Alphabet Club.

As outlined in the SET Child Protection Handbook or “Lilac Book”.

Dealing with allegations

The Alphabet Club is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively. The Club will not carry out any investigation itself into a suspected child abuse incident. On discovering an allegation of abuse, the Child Protection Officer will immediately refer the case to the local statutory child protection agencies. (Essex Safeguarding Children Board)

Further to this, the following principles will govern any suspected or reported case of abuse:

- Where actual or suspected abuse comes to the attention of staff, they will report this to the Manager, Chair of Trustees and the Child Protection Officer at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Staff are encouraged and supported to trust their professional judgment and if they suspect abuse has, or is taking place, to report this.
- Full written records of all reported incidents will be produced and maintained. Information recorded will include full details of the alleged incident; details of all the parties involved; any evidence or explanations offered by interested parties; relevant dates, times and locations and any supporting information or evidence from members of staff. The Alphabet Club will demonstrate great care in distinguishing between fact and opinion when recording suspected incidents of child abuse.
- The Manager, Chair of Trustees and the Child Protection Officer will be responsible for ensuring that written records are dated, signed and kept confidentially.
- If an allegation of abuse is made against the Manager or the Child Protection Officer, the Trustees will be informed as soon as possible. They will then assume responsibility for the situation or delegate this role to a senior member of staff.
- Staff will ensure that all concerns and allegations are treated with sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Any children involved in alleged incidents will be comforted and reassured.

In circumstances where a child makes an allegation or a disclosure, the member of staff concerned will:

1. Listen fully to all the child has to say.
2. Make no observable judgment.
3. Ask open ended questions that encourage the child to speak in their own words.

4. Ensure the child is safe, comfortable and not left alone.
5. Make no promises that cannot be kept; such as promising not to tell anybody what they are being told.

Staff will be made aware of the Department of Health's booklet 'What to do if you're worried a Child Is Being Abused?' (2003), and its recent guidance on 'Protecting Children from Harm'.

Such records will be kept in a separate file and will not be accessible to people in the Alphabet Club other than the Manager, Chair of Trustees and key worker or other member of staff as appropriate.

Liaise with other Bodies

The Alphabet Club operates in accordance with local authority guidelines. Confidential records kept on children about whom the Alphabet Club is anxious will be shared with the Social Services Team if the Club feels that adequate explanations for changes in the child's condition have not been provided.

If a report on a child is to be made to the authorities, the child's parents will be informed at the same time as the report is made.

The group will maintain ongoing contact with the registering authority, including names, addresses and telephone numbers of individual workers to ensure that it would be easy, in any emergency, for the Alphabet Club and the Social Services Team to work well together.

Records will also be kept of the local NSPCC contact, or other contact(s) as appropriate.

As outlined in the Essex Child Protection Committee Blue Book.

Support Families

The Alphabet Club will take every step in its power to build up trusting and supportive relationships between families and staff and volunteers in the group.

Where abuse at home is suspected, the Alphabet Club will continue to welcome the child and family while investigations proceed.

Confidential records kept on a child will be shared with the child's parents.

With the proviso that the care and safety of the child must always be paramount, the Alphabet Club will

Do all in its power to support and work with the child's family.

This policy was adopted on

Signed on behalf of the Club

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Date of Review

