Safeguarding Policy

Walthamstow Montessori School

(Referred to as WMS throughout)

Developed by:	**In conjunction with LBWF Safeguarding Team**
Updated on:	8th September 2026
Review date:	8th September 2027

This policy will be reviewed and ratified at a minimum annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.

1. PURPOSE & AIMS

WMS' safeguarding policy aims to ensure every child is safe, protected from harm and supported to thrive. This means we will always work to ensure:

- Appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- All staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.
- All staff are appropriately trained in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues.
- We identify children and young people who may need extra help.

This policy will provide clear direction to staff, volunteers, visitors, parents, and carers about expected behaviour and our responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.

Our setting fully recognises the contribution it can make to protect children from harm and supporting and promoting the welfare of those involved with the setting. The elements of

our policy are prevention, protection, and support. This policy applies to all those receiving services from or providing services on behalf of the setting.

2. LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) and the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers (updated September 2026).

We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board.

This policy is also based on the following legislation/guidance:

- The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children.
- The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (referred to in this policy as the "2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations") and Childcare Act 2006, which set out who is disqualified from working with children.
- Section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006 which sets out that early years providers registered on the Early Years Register and schools providing early years childcare, must comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children.
- Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children.
- Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, which explains settings' duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.
- The Human Rights Act 1998, which explains that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to individuals under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people regarding particular protected characteristics (including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race). This means our Principal, Ms Lorna Mahoney, should carefully consider how they are supporting their children regarding these characteristics. The Act allows our setting to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting children (where we can show it's proportionate). This includes making reasonable adjustments for disabled children.
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which explains that we must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. The PSED helps us to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve child outcomes. Some children

may be more at risk of harm from issues such as sexual violence; homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying; or racial discrimination.

- The Crime and Policing Act 2026
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused', DfE (March 2015)
- Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services (May 2026)
- Child Sexual Exploitation: A definition and guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers DfE (2017)
- The Education Inspection Framework (EIF) 2023
- Early Years Inspection Handbook for Ofsted Registered Provision 2023
- Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Considerations for Managers 2019
- SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years statutory guidance
- The London Safeguarding Children Procedures

We also have regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026).

3. DEFINITIONS

"Children" includes everyone under the age of 18.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g., via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.
Abuse is often categorised into four types of harm; neglect, physical, sexual, and/or

emotional. For definitions of these individual categories of harm, see Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers).
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Victim is a widely understood and recognised term, but we understand that not everyone who has been subjected to abuse considers themselves a victim or would want to be described that way. When managing an incident, we will be prepared to use any term that the child involved feels most comfortable with.

Alleged perpetrator(s) and **perpetrator(s)** are widely used and recognised terms. However, we will think carefully about what terminology we use (especially in front of children) as, in some cases, abusive behaviour can be harmful to the perpetrator too. We will decide what's appropriate and which terms to use on a case-by-case basis.

4. EQUALITY STATEMENT

Some children are at increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. WMS is committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We recognise those to be children who:

- are disabled or have certain health conditions and have specific additional needs
- have Special Educational Needs (whether they have a statutory Education, Health and Care plan)
- have a mental health need
- are young carers
- are showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines
- are frequently missing/going missing from education, home or care
- have experienced multiple suspensions, are at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit.
- are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- are at risk of being radicalised or exploited

- have a parent or carer in custody, or are affected by parental offending
- are in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- are misusing alcohol and other drugs themselves
- are at risk of so-called 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- are privately fostered

5. OUR ETHOS

The child's welfare is of paramount importance. WMS will establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, are listened to, and are safe. Children will be able to talk openly to any member of staff if they are worried or concerned about something.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. We recognise that our staff play a particularly important role as they can identify concerns early and provide help for children to prevent concerns from escalating. **All staff are advised to maintain an attitude of '*it could happen here*' where safeguarding is concerned.** When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members must always act in the **best interests** of the child.

All staff and regular visitors will, through induction and training, know how to recognise emerging needs and indicators of concern, how to respond to a disclosure from a child and how to record and report this information. They will not make promises to any child and will not keep secrets. Every child will know what the adult will have to do with any information they have chosen to disclose should it outline a safeguarding concern.

At all times we will work in partnership and endeavour to establish effective working relationships with parents, carers, and colleagues from other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children and WMS' procedures.

Throughout our curriculum we will provide activities and opportunities for children to develop skills to identify risks and stay safe. This will also be extended to include material that will encourage our children to develop essential life skills.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Name	Contact Details
Headteacher / Principal & Owner	Lorna Mahoney	principal@walthamstowmontessori.com
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Lorna Mahoney, Prinicpal	safeguarding@walthamstowmontessori.com
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads	Shamona Mugal, Petra Beilikova Stacey McCormack	safeguarding@walthamstowmontessori.com
Advisory Chair & Legal Support	Phil Parry	advisorychair@walthamstowmontessori.com
SENCo / Special Needs Lead	Julie Cooper	SENDCO@walthamstowmontessori.com
Named Person for Allegations against staff & volunteers (ASV)	Lorna Mahoney	principal@walthamstowmontessori.com

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and visitors of the setting and is consistent with the procedures outlined by Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended setting and off-site activities and include the responsibility to provide a safe environment.

WMS plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-setting approach to preparing children for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, and sexual violence/harassment.

As part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding children in our care, we will ensure that this policy is readily available for professionals, parents and partners to access via our website. We will ensure that parents are also given access to the policy prior to children attending the setting and following each update to it.

Where English is not the parents' first language, support and consideration will be given on how they are able to access this information.

We will ensure all staff are supported to read, understand, and put this policy into practice. This will include our responsibilities in relation to the EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements. For staff where English is not their first language, our policies will be made available in additional formats to ensure all staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. We will ensure our staff have sufficient English language to keep records, liaise with agencies, summon emergency help, and follow safety instructions.

We will ensure staff access safeguarding and child protection training at a minimum annually and receive support and supervision. In addition to this Safeguarding Policy, we also have other supporting policies and procedures in place to enable us to ensure that all children in our care are supported and feel safe.

Safeguarding Lead, Principal and Advisory Chair.

Our Principal and owner, Ms Lorna Mahoney, is accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of this policy and the setting's compliance with it. Collective responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children rests not only with the Principal, but also with the Deputy Safeguarding Leads and our Advisory Chair. The Safeguarding Lead, Lorna Mahoney oversees safeguarding across the setting. Please refer to the previous table.

The Principal and Deputy Safeguarding Leads will ensure that:

- The safeguarding policy is in place and is reviewed annually (as a minimum), is available publicly via our website and has been written in line with Waltham Forest expectations and the requirements of WMS policies and procedures.
- WMS contributes to inter-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- A senior member of staff from our leadership team is designated to take the lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place).
- All staff receive a safeguarding induction and are provided with a copy of this policy and the staff code of conduct.
- All staff undertake appropriate child protection training that is updated at least annually.
- Teaching staff are observed regularly by a senior member of staff during lessons, when changing nappies and during rest time.
- The setting has procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) or allegations about staff members (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors).
- Safer recruitment practices are followed to ensure the suitability of anyone who comes in to contact with children at our setting.
- The Principal and Deputy Safeguarding Leads remedy without delay any weakness regarding our safeguarding arrangements that are brought to their attention.
- That this policy reflects children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), or certain medical or physical health conditions, can face additional barriers to abuse or neglect being recognised.

Where another body is providing services or activities (regardless of whether the children who attend these services/activities are children on the setting roll) we will:

- Seek assurance that the other body has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies/procedures in place and inspect them if needed.

The Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Shamona Mugal, will act as the 'case manager' if an allegation of abuse is made against the Principal, where appropriate.

At agreed intervals, the Safeguarding lead and Deputy Safeguarding Leads will produce a safeguarding report that will record the training that has taken place, the number of staff attending and any outstanding training requirements for the setting. It will also record all safeguarding activity that has taken place, for example, meetings attended, reports written, training or induction given. It will not identify individual children.

Head of School

At WMS, the Principal and Deputy Safeguarding Leads are responsible for the implementation of this policy, including ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers:

- Are informed of our systems which support safeguarding practice, including this policy, as part of their induction.
- Understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Additionally, the Principal and Deputy Safeguarding Leads are responsible for:

- Identifying a member of staff to be the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Identifying additional members of staff to act as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) in their absence to ensure there is always cover for the role.
- Ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training, and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent.
- Ensuring that all staff undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and update this regularly.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice, and such concerns are addressed sensitively in accordance with agreed whistle-blowing procedures.
- Ensure that staff are confident to raise concerns regarding other staff members in relation to poor practice or breaches of the staff code of conduct.
- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) understand and follow the procedures included in this policy, particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Communicating this policy to parents when their child joins the setting and via the setting website.
- Ensure harmful and inappropriate online content is blocked through suitable online filtering and monitoring strategies to meet the setting's safeguarding needs.
- Ensuring a positive culture of safeguarding permeates throughout the setting.
- Liaise with Waltham Forest Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the event of an allegation of abuse being made against a member of staff or volunteer.
- Act as the "case manager" in the event of an allegation of abuse is made against another member of staff or volunteer, where appropriate.

- Ensuring that the procedures for the management of low-level concerns in respect of staff and volunteers is adhered to, with LADO consultation as appropriate.
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met.
- Ensuring each child is assigned a key person.

The Principal and Deputy Safeguarding Leads will also make available information to parents and carers regarding:

- how the setting supports children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- food and drinks provided for children (see Food and Drink Policy)
- details of all our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- making copies available on request of relevant procedures to be followed in the event of a parent and/or carer failing to collect a child at the appointed time, or in the event of a child going missing at, or away from, the setting.
- staffing in the setting; the name of their child's key person and their role; and a telephone number for parents and/or carers to contact in an emergency

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Our DSL, Lorna Mahoney, is the most senior member of staff from the leadership team and takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection in our setting.

The role of the DSL will be made explicit in the postholder's job description. The DSL and deputies will undertake formal DSL training at a minimum of every two years to support them to discharge their safeguarding responsibilities.

The name of the DSL and deputies will be clearly advertised on the settings noticeboard along with a statement explaining the settings role in referring and monitoring welfare and safeguarding concerns.

During opening times, the DSL and/or our deputies will always be available for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, a DSL is not available on the setting site in person, we will ensure that they are available via telephone and any other relevant media.

The DSL is responsible for ensuring that all staff members and volunteers are aware of our policy and the procedure they need to follow. They will ensure that all staff, volunteers, and regular visitors have received appropriate child protection information during induction and that appropriate training needs are identified.

The DSL and our DDSLs will maintain written records and child protection files ensuring that they are kept confidential and stored securely.

The DSL at WMS will be given the required time, funding, training, resources, and support to:

- Provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters.

- Take lead responsibility for our setting's approach towards online safety, including the management of appropriate filtering and monitoring on setting devices and setting networks.
- Take part in strategy discussions and multi-agency meetings.
- Contribute to the assessment of children.
- Refer suspected cases, as appropriate, (to Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides), Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police).
- Have a good understanding of harmful sexual behaviour.
- Be confident that they know what local specialist support is available to support children and be confident as to how to access this support.

The DSL will also liaise with Waltham Forest case managers for child protection concerns as appropriate.

The full responsibilities of the DSL and deputies are set out in their job description.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

The Data Protection Act 2018 controls how personal information is used by organisations, businesses or the government and is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
For a guide to GDPR see General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

The DPA (2018) **does not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe**. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

When deciding whether information needs to be shared with staff within the setting or with other agencies, staff should take account of the following principles, bearing in mind that the most important consideration is whether sharing information is likely to support the safeguarding and protection of a child:

- Necessary & Proportionate
- Relevant
- Adequate
- Accurate
- Timely
- Secure
- Recorded

Staff should consider when they share information, who they share it with, how much they share, and where possible they should be transparent about the fact that they're sharing. It is important to acknowledge that sharing of information could be essential for the protection of the child.

Although the process for deciding whether to share information is the same within and outside a setting, in terms of proportionality and the need to know, sharing information (and the decisions around it) with staff from other agencies needs to be documented. It is reasonable for staff to discuss day-to-day concerns about children with colleagues in order to ensure that children's general needs are met. However, staff should report all child protection and safeguarding concerns to the DSL or, in the case of concerns about the DSL to the Registered Manager. The person receiving the referral will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

The DSL will normally obtain consent from parents/carers to share sensitive information with outside agencies. Where there is good reason to do so, the DSL may share information *without* consent and will record the reason for not obtaining consent. If any member of staff receives a request from a parent/carer to see child protection records, they will refer the request to the data protection officer.

Every effort will be made to prevent unauthorised access to sensitive information. Portable devices such as mobile phones, laptop computers, tablets or on portable media will be kept confidential through encryption / using cloud storage / with two-stage authentication. Devices will be kept in locked storage when not in use.

If a victim asks the setting not to tell anyone about sexual violence or sexual harassment:

- Staff may still lawfully share it if there's another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies.
- The DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.

The DSL should consider that:

- Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to Waltham Forest Children's Social Care department (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides).
- Rape, assault by penetration (including penetration with and object), and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains.

Regarding anonymity, all staff will:

- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of abuse or neglect, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved.

- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumors and exposing victims' identities.

The government's Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services (May 2026) includes 7 'golden rules' for sharing information, and will support staff who have to make decisions about sharing information

If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they should speak to the DSL (or deputy).

8. TRAINING & INDUCTION

When new staff join our setting, they will be informed of the safeguarding arrangements in place. They will be given a copy of WMS' Safeguarding Policy along with the staff code of conduct and told who our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies are. All staff are expected to read these key documents.

Every new member of staff or volunteer will also receive safeguarding training during their induction period. This programme will include information relating to signs and symptoms of abuse, how to manage a disclosure from a child, how to record concerns and the remit of the role of the DSL. The training will also include information about how to respond to concerns about another adult's behaviour and suitability to work with children, including the whistleblowing procedures.

In addition to the safeguarding induction, we will ensure that mechanisms are in place to support staff to understand and discharge their safeguarding responsibilities. To achieve this, we will ensure that training will be updated at least annually and will:

- Be integrated, aligned, and considered as part of the whole-setting safeguarding approach and wider staff training, and curriculum planning.
- Be in line with advice from Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Support staff with how to manage behaviour to ensure a positive, safe environment.
- Provide a clear understanding of the needs of all children.
- Outline the government's anti-radicalisation strategy, Prevent, to enable them to identify children at risk of being drawn into terrorism and to challenge extremist ideas.
- Outline thematic safeguarding e.g. FGM, CCE, CSE, Online Safety.

All staff members receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings), as required to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Volunteers will receive appropriate training, if applicable.

Staff are required to attend safeguarding training which is specifically designed for staff caring for 0–5-year-olds which must cover all the areas set out in Annex C of the EYFS Statutory Framework: "Criteria for effective safeguarding training."

Training will be renewed every two years for all staff. Staff are also supported to put their training into practice via regular updates and reminders from the DSL through training sessions as well as meetings with their line manager which will always include safeguarding as an agenda item.

In addition to formal training, DSL's will ensure that they update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals, but at least annually, to keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

We actively encourage all of our staff to keep updated with the most recent local and national safeguarding advice and guidance, links that are recommended include Annex A of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) on specific safeguarding issues such as Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation, Child-on-Child Abuse (including harassment and violence), and Female Genital Mutilation as well as guidance accessible from Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children Board.

The Principal and designated safeguarding leads will receive training about safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) at induction, which is regularly updated. This is to make sure that they:

- Have the knowledge and information needed to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities, such as providing strategic challenge.
- Can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support the setting to deliver a robust whole-setting approach to safeguarding.

As one of our DDSLs may be required to act as the 'case manager' if an allegation of abuse is made against the Principal, they will receive training in managing allegations for this purpose.

9. RECOGNISING ABUSE & TAKING ACTION

All WMS staff, volunteers and students follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue (references to the DSL include the DSL or deputy DSL, otherwise known as DDSL).

All staff are encouraged to report and record any worries and concerns that they have and not see these as insignificant. Staff should report concerns on the WMS Concern/Incident Form as soon as possible.

On occasions, a referral to Children Social Care is justified by a single incident such as an injury or disclosure of abuse. More often however, worries and concerns accumulate over a period and are evidenced by building up a picture of harm over time; this is particularly true in cases of emotional abuse and neglect. In these circumstances, it is crucial that staff record and pass on worries and concerns in accordance with this policy to allow the DSL to build up a picture and access support for the child and family at the earliest opportunity. A

reliance on memory without accurate and contemporaneous records of concern could lead to a failure to protect.

At times, a child's needs may not be able to be met by universal interventions alone and will best be met through a more targeted response. At this point the child's needs will still be considered as 'emerging' and will therefore be below the threshold for specialist or statutory interventions.

When indicators of needs that fall under this category are identified, the DSL will take responsibility for exploring issues with the child and family, with guidance and support as necessary from Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides).

If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger, make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police immediately if the DSL or a deputy is unavailable. Anyone can make a referral. Inform the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly, referrals will be made in line with the London Safeguarding Children Procedures and Waltham Forest Safeguarding Procedures.

If a child makes a disclosure to you, you should:

- **Listen carefully to what they are saying.** Be patient and focus on what you are being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. Allow them time to talk freely and do not ask leading questions.
- **Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset.** If you appear shocked or as you do not believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they have said.
- **Let them know they have done the right thing in telling you.** Reassurance can be a big impact. If they have kept the abuse a secret, it can have a big impact knowing they have shared what has happened.
- **Tell them it is not their fault, and they have done the right thing telling you.** Abuse is never a child's fault. It is important they hear and know this.
- **Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on**. Do not promise to keep it a secret.
- **Document your conversation as soon as possible using the child's own words**. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it.
- **If you consider the child to be at risk of harm, tell the DSL or deputy DSL straight away.**
- **If they are not available, make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police directly** and inform the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so.

If you discover that FGM has taken place, or a child is at risk of FGM:

FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs". FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of

child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Any member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a child under 18 **must** report this to the police and inform the DSL.

Any member of staff who suspects a child is *at risk* of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out must speak to the DSL, record their concerns and follow Waltham Forest's FGM guidance.

Early Help

An Early Help assessment is undertaken when it appears a child and family would benefit from coordinated support from more than one agency. Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. The assessment should identify what help the child and family need to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989. The Early Help assessment with consent from the family should be undertaken by a lead professional who could be a teacher, SENCO, GP, family support worker and/or health visitor.

An Early Help Assessment is not necessarily a referral. The DSL should discuss with Children's Services whether it would be more appropriate to undertake an Early Help Assessment or to make a referral. Further information surrounding the Early Help offer is available from Waltham Forest's Early Help Service.

Making a Referral

Where the DSL deems it appropriate to refer the case to Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides) or the police, they will make the referral. Generally, the consent of parents or carers should be obtained before making a formal referral, unless to do so would place the child at additional risk of harm.

Staff are advised to refer to the Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing for advice. Where a decision cannot be made in relation to whether to seek consent or not, the DSL should seek advice on the scenario from Waltham Forest's MASH team (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides) without disclosing the identity of the child/family and record the decisions reached.

If staff members make a referral directly to Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides), they must tell the DSL as soon as possible.

The Local Authority will decide within 1 working day of a referral about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or

person who made the referral must follow up with the Local Authority if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral or there is a disagreement about the threshold outcome from a referral that has been made, the DSL must follow Waltham Forest Escalation Procedures (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides) to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

Concerns about an unborn child

Where a member of staff becomes aware of concerns that may affect the safety or welfare of an unborn child; for example, concerns about parent's substance misuse, domestic abuse, mental health or a pattern of previous children being removed from the family, they should raise it with the DSL. The DSL will seek advice from or make a referral to Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the local authority where the family resides) in line with local safeguarding children's procedures. Early identification of concern before a baby is born allows support to be put in place as early as possible.

Radicalisation / Extremism

We recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation and extremism is no different to safeguarding against any other form of vulnerability. At WMS we will ensure that:

- Through training, all staff, volunteers and students understand what radicalisation and extremism is, why we need to be vigilant and how to respond when concerns arise.
- There are systems in place for keeping children safe from extremist material when accessing the internet in our setting by using effective filtering and usage policies.
- The DSL has received Prevent training and will act as the point of contact for any concerns relating to radicalisation and extremism.
- The DSL will make referrals to Children's Services and will represent our setting at Channel meetings as required.
- Through our curriculum, we will promote the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of children.

If a child is not in immediate danger, staff should speak to the DSL in the first instance to agree a course of action.

If, in exceptional circumstances, the DSL and any deputies are not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or seek advice from Children's Social Care. Make a referral to Children's Social Care directly if appropriate. Inform the DSL as soon as practically possible after the referral.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will consider the level of risk and decide what next steps to take. This could include seeking consent to complete a referral to Channel, the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of being drawn into

terrorism, and Waltham Forest Children's Social Care team (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides).

London Borough of Waltham Forest are available for consultation by emailing prevent@walthamforest.gov.uk.

The Department for Education also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which setting staff can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a child. You can also email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk. Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- Think someone is in immediate danger.
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group.
- See or hear something that may be terrorist related.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and Child-on-Child Abuse (including harassment and violence)

We are aware that child on child abuse does take place amongst young children. This may take the form of bullying, physically hurting another child, threats with weapons, emotional abuse and or sexual abuse including harassment and the making or sharing of nude or semi-nude photos. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. Where the abuse is of a sexual nature, we will report this form of abuse in the same way as we do for adults abusing children and will take advice from Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides) to access support for both the victim and the perpetrator, as they too could also be a victim of abuse.

We know that children who develop harmful sexual behaviour have often experienced abuse and neglect themselves. Should the abuse be other than sexual we will use the setting's policy on managing behaviour.

As part of safeguarding children in our setting we will ensure that our designated safeguarding lead and deputy safeguarding lead are trained in recognising HSB.

Risk assessment

When there has been a report of HSB, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will make an immediate risk and needs assessment. The risk and needs assessment for a report of HSB will consider:

- The victim, especially their protection and support
- Whether there may have been other victims
- The alleged perpetrator(s)
- Any/all the other children, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms, and

- The time and location of the incident and any action required to make the location safer.

Bruising in babies

Bruising in a baby who is not independently mobility, is unusual. Should we observe bruising in a baby who is not crawling, cruising or independently mobile depending on the timing and the nature of the concern we will raise the concern with the child's parent in the first instance (unless we believe this would put the baby at risk) however, bruising in pre-mobile children always requires a referral in line with Waltham Forest guidance.

Mental Health

We recognise that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Our staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Our setting can access a range of advice to help them identify children in need of extra mental health support, this includes working with external agencies. If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action will be taken to follow the settings child protection policy and by speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

If staff feel that a child is in danger, they should call 999 or arrange for them to be taken to A&E immediately by a parent/carer or other suitable person. If a child needs help urgently for their mental health, but it's not an emergency, staff can get help from by contacting NHS 111 by phone or online.

Supporting children with online safety

As a setting, we recognise information technology provides endless learning opportunities for children. We also acknowledge that not all encounters with information technology are positive and as such can be harmful to the safety and the wellbeing of the children. For this reason, when using information technology programmes and equipment we will:

- Check all apps, websites, and search results before using them with children.
- Always ensure children are supervised when accessing the internet.
- Ensure safety modes and filters are applied to computers / tablets.
- Role model safe behaviour and privacy awareness.
- Talk to children about internet safety.

- Ask permission before taking a child's picture even if parental consent has been given.
- Check privacy settings to make sure personal data is not being shared inadvertently or inappropriately.
- Offer parents and carer's advice and guidance and support in identifying risks that may be present to children on-line.

To ensure that the children in our care are always protected we will complete an annual review of our online safety policy which will be supported by an annual risk assessment. This will be to consider and evaluate the risks posed to the children whilst participating in online activities.

We follow the Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations guidance issued by the UK Council for Internet Safety and our practice is informed by the Department for Education's Internet Safety guidance.

Children Attendance and Absence

Although it is not mandatory for children to attend an early years setting, it is important that all staff understand that non-attendance can be a safeguarding issue.

We maintain daily records of attendance for all children. Any unexplained absence will be followed up with the child's parent/carer on the same day. Repeated, patterned or prolonged absence will be reported to the DSL and considered in relation to possible safeguarding concerns.

Absences which raise welfare concerns will be escalated to Waltham Forest MASH/Family Help in line with local procedures.

Please refer to our Attendance Policy which we share with parents and/or carers. This includes expectations for reporting child absences and the actions we will take if a child is absent without notification, or for a prolonged period of time.

We will aim to hold at least two emergency contacts for each child wherever possible.

Concerns about a staff member, temporary staff, volunteer or contractor

If anyone has concerns about a member of staff (including temporary staff, volunteer, or contractor), or an allegation is made about a member of staff (including a temporary staff member, volunteer, or contractor) staff are expected to report this to the Principal.

If you have concerns or become aware of concerns related to the Principal, staff should first speak to the Advisory Chair.

The Advisory Chair will then follow the procedures set out in our 'Managing Allegations against Staff' policy.

10. SUPERVISION OF STAFF, KEY PERSON, AND RATIOS

Supervision of staff

To ensure staff are supported and developed to effectively carry out their role in protecting and safeguarding children in their care the setting's practice is led by the Principal who has an approved safeguarding qualification. The Principal has the responsibility for ensuring that procedures are in place for all staff to receive regular formal supervision that will provide staff with an opportunity to review their performance, practice and development in working with the children and their families.

The supervision staff access will provide opportunities to:

- discuss any issues – particularly concerning children's development or wellbeing, including child protection concerns.
- identify solutions to address issues as they arise.
- receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.

Regular support, advice, training and supervision for the Deputy Head of School will be provided or arranged by the Principal or Advisory Chair.

Key Person

Each child at WMS will be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate. Where this support may relate to a safeguarding concern, this will be in consultation with the DSL.

Ratios

To ensure the safety and the wellbeing of the children in our setting we will ensure we follow the current recommended ratios and qualifications for the safe care of children as set out in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children will usually be within sight **and** hearing of a staff member and must always be within sight or hearing of a staff member.

These are as follows:

For children aged 2 and under:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every three children.

- At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, and be suitably experienced in working with children under two.
- At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.
- At least half of all staff must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies.
- Where there is a room for under two-year-olds, the member of staff in charge of that room must, in the judgement of the provider, have suitable experience of working with under twos.

For children aged two:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every five children.
- At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.
- At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

For children aged three and over in registered early years provision at any time where a person with an approved level 6 qualification is working directly with children:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children.
- At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.

For children aged three and over in registered early years provision where a person with approved level 6 qualification is not working directly with children:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every eight children.
- At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.
- At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

Suitable students on long term placements and volunteers (aged 17 or over) and staff working as apprentices in early education (aged 16 or over) may be included in the ratios at the level below their level of study, provided they are deemed competent and responsible. No person under the age of 17 will care for children unsupervised at any time.

There is a named deputy who, in our judgement, is capable and qualified to take charge in the manager's absence.

11. SAFER SLEEP

Where children sleep at our setting, we will ensure that sleep mats and bedding are in good condition and suited to the age of the child.

Sleeping children will be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe and placed down to sleep safely in line with the government safety guidance: Reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Regular observations of staff take place during rest time. Please refer to our Sleeping Policy.

We also share and follow Safer Sleep for Babies – A guide for professionals published by the Lullaby Trust.

12. MOBILE PHONES, SMART WATCHES, PHOTOGRAPHY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NURSERY

To ensure the safety of the children in the setting we operate a no-mobile phone usage in the setting for parents, visitors and staff.

To enforce this policy smart watches are not permitted at WMS. Phones must not be taken by staff into the classroom or any other area that children may be in. Staff may use their phones during their breaks, but only in the following areas: Kitchen, Partridge Room and Office. In terms of visitors to the setting they will be asked to leave their mobile phone/ smart watches in the office whilst on the premises, unless supervised by a member of staff whilst on a tour of the premises.

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to be vigilant and to report any concerns to the Principal, Deputy Head or Assistant Head.

Images of Children

Photographs taken for the purpose of recording a child or group of children participating in activities or celebrating their achievements is an effective form or recording their progression in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, it is essential that photographs are taken and stored appropriately to safeguard children.

- Only the designated setting devices are to be used to take any photo within the setting or on outings.
- Images taken on setting devices must be deemed suitable without putting the child/children in any compromising positions that could cause embarrassment or distress.
- Setting devices should be placed within a secure location when not in use.
- Images taken and stored on setting devices must be downloaded as soon as possible, ideally once a week. Each Friday, all setting devices are checked by a senior member of staff.
- Parental permission is obtained from the parent/carer on joining the setting to the use of photographs in the setting or on wider platforms which will be adhered to.

13. CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, DISABILITIES OR HEALTH ISSUES

We recognise that children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges and are three times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group, including:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration.

- Children being more prone to peer group isolation than other children.
- The potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

We will identify a member of staff to act as a SENCO who will familiarise themselves with the early years section of the SEND Code of Practice.

14. CHILDREN WITH A SOCIAL WORKER

Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health. The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

Where we are aware that a child has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- Responding to absence where there are known safeguarding risks.
- The provision of pastoral and/or additional support.

15. RECORDS AND INFORMATION SHARING

If staff are concerned about the welfare or safety of any child at our setting, they will record their concern on the WMS Concern/Incident Form. Any worries or concerns should be passed to the DSL without delay.

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions must be recorded in writing. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern.
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved.
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome. This will include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as Local Authority Children's Social Care or the Prevent program etc.

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child.

Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

When a child leaves our setting to move to another setting or a school, the DSL will contact the DSL at the new setting/school and will ensure that the child protection file is forwarded to the receiving setting within the first 5 days of the start of a new term and within 5 days for an in-year transfer.

We will retain evidence to demonstrate how the file has been transferred; this may be in the form of a written confirmation of receipt from the receiving setting and/or evidence of recorded delivery. Where a parent elects to remove their child from the setting roll to home educate, we will arrange to transfer any safeguarding concerns to the relevant department within Waltham Forest.

16. WORKING WITH CHILDREN, PARENTS & CARERS

WMS is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to support them to understand our statutory responsibilities in this area.

When children join WMS, parents and carers will be informed that we have a safeguarding policy. A copy will be provided to parents/carers on request and is available on our website. Parents and carers will be informed of our legal duty to assist our colleagues in other agencies with child protection enquiries and what happens should we have cause to make a referral to Children's Services.

We are committed to working with parents positively, openly, and honestly. We ensure that all parents/carers are treated with respect, dignity, and courtesy. We respect parents'/carer's rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission, or it is necessary to do so to safeguard a child from harm.

We will seek to work together with parents to support any worries or concerns we may have about their child unless to do so may place a child at increased risk of harm.

To keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them, WMS requires parents/carers to provide accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Name and address of every parent and/or carer who is known to the provider.
- Information about any other person who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Which parent(s) and/or carer(s) the child normally lives with.
- Emergency contact details for parents and/or carers

WMS will retain this information on file. Information about children will only be shared with adults who have parental responsibility for that child or with those for whom an individual with parental responsibility has given permission, and we have been supplied with the adult's full details in writing.

17. CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

In some circumstances, all professionals involved with a child will be expected to support statutory agencies and provide information relating to the welfare of a child and how to support a child/children and their parent/s or carer/s. One such example is at a child protection conference. There may be circumstances where WMS may be asked to participate in Child Protection processes pursuant to the Children Act 1989.

Children's Services will convene an Initial Child Protection Conference once a child protection enquiry under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 has been undertaken and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of significant harm. A review conference will take place once a child has been made the subject of a Child Protection Plan to monitor the safety of the child and the required reduction in risk.

Staff members may be asked to attend a Child Protection Conference or Core Group meeting on behalf of WMS. Usually, the person representing the setting at these meetings will be the DSL. In any event, the person attending will need to have as much relevant up to date information about the child as possible; any member of staff may be required to contribute to this process.

All reports for Child Protection Conferences will be prepared in advance using the guidance and template report provided by Children Social Care. The information contained in the report will be shared with parents before the conference as appropriate and will include information relating to the child's physical, emotional, and personal development, and the child's presentation at setting. To complete such reports, all relevant information will be sought from staff working with the child.

Clearly Child Protection Conferences can be upsetting for parents. We recognise that we may have more contact with parents than other professionals involved. We will work in an open and honest way with any parent whose child has been referred to Children's Services or whose child is subject to a Child Protection plan. Our responsibility is to promote the protection and welfare of all children, and our aim is to achieve this in partnership with our parents.

18. PROFESSIONAL DISAGREEMENT AND ESCALATION OF CONCERNS

When Dealing with Disagreement and Escalation of Concerns, the DSL or other appropriate member of staff will:

- Contact the line manager in Children's Social Care if they consider that the social care response to a referral has not led to the child being adequately safeguarded and follow this up in writing.
- Contact the line manager in Children's Social Care if they consider that the child is not being adequately safeguarded by the child protection plan and follow this up in writing.
- Use the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Children Partnership Escalation Procedures if this does not resolve the concern. Waltham Forest's escalation procedures can be found here.

19. CHECKING THE IDENTITY AND SUITABILITY OF VISITORS

All visitors will be required to verify their identity to the satisfaction of staff and to leave their belongings, including their mobile phone(s) / smart watch, in a safe place during their visit.

If the visitor is unknown to the setting, we will check their credentials and reason for visiting before allowing them to enter the setting. Visitors should be ready to produce identification.

Visitors are expected to sign in and out of the premises by logging their details in the visitors' book.

Visitors to the setting who are visiting for a professional purpose, such as educational psychologists and setting improvement officers, will be asked to show photo ID and:

- Will be asked to show their DBS certificate, which will be checked alongside their photo ID; or
- The organisation sending the professional, such as the Local Authority or educational psychology service, will provide prior written confirmation that an appropriate level of DBS check has been carried out.

All other visitors will always be accompanied by a member of staff.

Banned dog breeds (Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 s.1, including XXL Bully type) are prohibited from the premises even with an exemption certificate.

20. USE OF SETTING SITE BY EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

WMS recognises our wider responsibilities should we receive an allegation relating to an incident that happens when an individual or organisation which uses our setting premises for the purposes of running activities for children.

We will also undertake appropriate measures to ensure that any organisation using our premises has appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place where they are delivering services to children.

Where we become aware of any allegations related to staff using our premises, we will refer to the Waltham Forest LADO in line with our Managing Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers procedures.

21. SAFER RECRUITMENT

WMS will ensure that a Safer Recruitment policy is in place and updated annually, and that it is followed for the recruitment of all permanent and temporary staff, and volunteers.

To make sure we recruit suitable people, we will ensure that those involved in the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training.

We have put the following steps in place during our recruitment and selection process to ensure we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Planning and Advertising

Every job description and person specification include responsibility for safeguarding

Interviewing

- The interview process will include a question/questions regarding a candidate's understanding of safeguarding and their motivation to be working with children
- Verify the preferred candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities
- At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training

Vetting

- Obtain references for all shortlisted candidates via reference proforma, including internal candidates, and follow-up with the referee by phone
- References must be obtained before an individual starts their employment
- Carry out additional or alternative checks for applicants who have lived or worked outside the UK
- Undertake an online search for all shortlisted candidates to identify any incidents or issues that are publicly available online which might require further exploration with the applicant during interview.
- Ensure that applicants for teaching posts (where applicable) are not subject to a prohibition order
- For staff including volunteers who work in our childcare provision or who are directly concerned with the management of such provision (e.g. Trustees, Management Committee Members), we will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009.
- All applicants, including volunteers, will only begin work after an enhanced DBS and Barred list checks are received.
- Barred List checks will always be taken prior to the individual starting to work in the setting.

Appointment

- Offers of employment are fully conditional on the obtaining of a DBS certificate and complete references using a references proforma (that requests whether

candidates would be re-employed for the same post and whether there have ever been any safeguarding concerns), followed up by verification via telephone.
- Where a candidate has an entry/entries on their DBS, a risk assessment will be carried out pursuant to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to ensure suitability.

Induction

- Once appointed, a full safeguarding induction process must be put in place for all new staff, that includes rigorous monitoring in order to pick up any concerns early.
- All staff are required to sign to confirm they have received a copy of the safeguarding policy and Staff Behaviour Policy (code of conduct), and that they have read relevant sections of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework their role.

Third Party Organisations

- WMS obtains written confirmation from supply agencies and third-party organisations that they have satisfactorily undertaken all appropriate checks in respect of individuals they provide to work in the setting and that the setting would have undertaken if they were employing the individual directly; and that those individuals are suitable to work with children.
- We will ensure that any staff from third party organisations have suitable and up-to-date training in safeguarding.
- Trainees and students on placements should be subject to the same checks as other members of staff. However, fee-funded trainee teachers' checks should be carried out by the training provider and should be judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children. However, the setting requires written confirmation from the provider that these checks have been carried out and are satisfactory.
- Where a risk assessment has been carried out pursuant to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, the setting will request sight of the risk assessment to ensure it is in agreement.

Recording

- The setting maintains a record about staff qualifications and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed (including the criminal records check reference number, the date a check was obtained and details of who obtained it).

Our Safer Recruitment procedures include that all applicants will:

- **Complete an application form** which includes their employment history and explains any gaps
- **Provide two referees**, including the current employer, and at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children. References should be requested by using a proforma that asks directly about whether there have ever been any safeguarding concerns raised and whether the applicant would be hired again for the same position; references should be followed up by phone. Additionally, we will:
    - Not accept open references e.g. to whom it may concern.
    - Not rely on applicants to obtain their reference.

- Ensure any references are from the applicant's current employer, training provider or education setting and have been completed by a senior person with appropriate authority.
- Not accept references from a family member.
- Obtain verification of the individual's most recent relevant period of employment where the applicant is not currently employed.
- Secure a reference from the relevant employer from the last time the applicant worked with children (if not currently working with children). If the applicant has never worked with children, then ensure a reference is from their current employer, training provider or education setting.
- Ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source.
- Contact referees to clarify content where information is vague or insufficient information is provided.
- Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any discrepancies with the applicant.
- Establish the reason for the applicant leaving their current or most recent post, and ensure any concerns are resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed.

- **Provide evidence** of identity and qualifications
- **Be checked in accordance with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** regulations as appropriate to their role if offered employment. This will include:
  - Enhanced criminal records check for every person aged 16 and over (including for unsupervised volunteers, and supervised volunteers who provide personal care) who:
    - Works directly with children.
    - Lives on the premises on which the childcare is provided (unless there is no access to the part of the premises when and where children are cared for) and/or
    - Works on the premises on which the childcare is provided (unless they do not work on the part of the premises where the childcare takes place, or do not work there at times when children are present)
  - an enhanced DBS check and a barred list check for those including unsupervised volunteers engaged in Regulated Activity.
  - an enhanced DBS check without a barred list check for all volunteers not involved in Regulated Activity but who have the opportunity of regular contact with children.
  - an enhanced DBS check for all Trustees (not including associate members), which will only include a barred list check for Trustees involved in Regulated Activity
  - An additional criminal records check (or checks if more than one country) should also be made for anyone who has lived or worked abroad
- Provide evidence of their right to work in the UK, if offered employment
- Be interviewed by a panel of at least two leaders/ Trustees with at least one member of the panel trained in Safer Recruitment in the past three years.

Volunteers

- Volunteers will undergo checks commensurate with their work in the setting and contact with children. Under no circumstances will a volunteer who has not been appropriately checked be left unsupervised or be allowed to engage in regulated activity.
- From 1st September 2026, the Crime and Policing Act 2026 removed the previous 'supervision exemption' from the definition of regulated activity. Any volunteer who teaches, trains, cares for or supervises children frequently (On more than 3 days in a 30 day period) or overnight is now in regulated activity, even where they are supervised, and must undergo the same enhanced DBS check and children's barred list check as staff before starting.
- Volunteers who help only occasionally and under supervision, who do not provide overnight or personal care, are not in regulated activity. They will undergo safer recruitment check appropriate to their role, but do not require a barred list check.
- Where it is unclear whether a volunteer's role meets the threshold for regulated activity, full enhanced DBS and barred list check will be obtained.

Contractors

- The setting checks the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the setting and requests verification of DBS checks where appropriate. As required by statutory guidance, where contractors and/or their staff are engaged in regulated activity, barred list checks are also requested.
- Contractors who have not undergone checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or in regulated activity.
- Staff are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings, arrests and charges that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting).

Disqualification by Association

Disqualification 'by association' means that individuals could be disqualified from providing childcare in a childminding setting because an offence or offences have been committed by someone who lives in the individual's household.

From 31st August 2018, changes were made to the childcare disqualification arrangement. These changes reflected in removing the 'disqualification by association' element from non-domestic settings.

However, disqualification by association is still relevant where childcare is provided in domestic settings (for example where childminding is provided in the home) or under registration on domestic premises, including where an assistant works on non-domestic premises up to 50% of the time under a domestic registration.

22. SAFER WORKING PRACTICE

All staff or volunteers at WMS who come into contact with our children have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare. There is a legal duty placed upon us to ensure that

all adults who work with or on behalf of our children are competent, confident, and safe to do so.

All staff will be provided with a copy of our Staff Code of Conduct during their induction. They will be expected to know and adhere to our policy on conduct and carry out their duties in accordance with this advice.

If staff, visitors, volunteers, or parent helpers are working with children alone they will, wherever possible, be visible to other members of staff. They will be expected to inform another member of staff of their whereabouts in setting, who they are with and for how long. Doors, ideally, should have a clear glass panel in them and be left open.

Guidance about acceptable conduct and safe practice will be given to all staff and volunteers during induction. These are sensible steps that every adult should take in their daily professional conduct with children. Advice can also be found in Guidance for Safer Working Practices for Adults who work with Children and Young People in Education Settings' which includes relevant information for EYFS settings to consider. All staff and volunteers are expected to carry out their work in accordance with code of conduct and will be made aware that failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action.

23. MANAGING ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Our aim is to provide a safe and supportive environment which secures the wellbeing and very best outcomes for the children. We do, however, recognise that sometimes allegations of abuse are made.

We recognise that allegations, when they occur, are distressing and difficult for all concerned. We also recognise that some allegations are genuine and that there are adults who deliberately seek to harm or abuse children.

We will take all possible steps to safeguard our children and to ensure that the adults in our setting are safe to work with children. We will always ensure that the procedures outlined by Working Together to Safeguard Children and Chapter 7 of the London Safeguarding Children Procedures are adhered to, and will seek appropriate advice from the Designated Officer for the Local Authority (LADO). The LADO can be contacted to request a consultation or to make a referral via e-mail: **LADO@walthamforest.gov.uk** or by phone on **020 8496 3646**.

If an allegation is made or information is received about any member of staff (or volunteer) who works in our setting who has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The member of staff receiving the information should inform the Deputy Head of School and Principal immediately. This includes concerns relating to agency and supply staff and volunteers.

We may also seek consultation with the LADO where we believe that an individual has behaved in a way in their personal life that raises safeguarding concerns. These concerns do not need to directly relate to a child.

Initial Action by person receiving or identifying an allegation or concern:

- Whilst allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, they may also be founded in truth; all staff must report allegations even if they reasonably believe them to be false.
- All allegations must be investigated properly, in line with agreed procedures and outcomes recorded.
- Staff must treat all allegations seriously and keep an open mind.
- The evaluation of Low-Level Concerns should be agreed in consultation with the LADO in line with Chapter 7 of the London Safeguarding Children Procedures (see 2.13).
- Make a written record of the information, including the time, date and place of incident/s, persons present and what was said and sign and date this.
- Immediately report the matter to the Principal.
- Do not share allegations with any other member of staff, including the subject of the allegation.
- If the allegation is against the Principal, staff must report to the Advisory Chair.
- If there is a lack of faith in the safeguarding governance, all staff can contact the local authority's Designated Officers (also known as LADOs) directly, without delay: **020 8496 3646 / LADO@walthamforest.gov.uk**.

The member of staff receiving the information should inform the Principal immediately. This includes concerns relating to agency and supply staff and volunteers.

A 'case manager' will lead any investigation. This will be the Principal or Advisory Chair. If the Principal is the subject of the allegation, the case manager will be identified at the earliest opportunity.

In the event that the Principal and Advisory Chair are uncontactable on the day, the information must be passed to and dealt with by the Deputy Head.

The Principal/Advisory Chair will seek advice from the LADO within one working day. No member of staff will undertake further investigations before receiving advice from the LADO.

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 – this line is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday or via e-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Notification to Ofsted of allegations of harm should take place as soon as reasonably possible, and no more than 14 days from when the event happened.

WMS has a legal duty to refer to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or if there is reason to believe the member of staff has committed one of a number of listed offences, and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left. The DBS will consider whether to bar the person. If these circumstances arise in relation to a member of staff at our setting, a referral will be made as soon as possible after the resignation or removal of the individual in accordance with advice from the LADO and/or HR. For concerns that are not deemed to meet the 'harm' threshold, we will follow our Low-Level Concerns Procedure below.

24. LOW-LEVEL CONCERNS

This section applies to all concerns (including allegations) about members of staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors, which do not meet the threshold for 'harm' or 'risk of harm'.

The evaluation of Low-Level Concerns should be agreed in consultation with the LADO in line with Chapter 7 of the London Safeguarding Children Procedures (see 2.13).

Concerns may arise through, for example:

- Suspicion
- Complaint
- Safeguarding concern or allegation from another member of staff
- Disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside the setting
- Pre-employment vetting checks

We recognise the importance of responding to and dealing with any concerns in a timely manner to safeguard the welfare of children.

Definition of low-level concerns

The term 'low-level' concern is any concern – no matter how small – that an adult working in or on behalf of the setting may have acted in a way that:

- Is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, **and**
- Does not meet the harm/risk of harm threshold

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- Being overly friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door
- Humiliating children

Sharing low-level concerns

We recognise the importance of creating a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share low-level concerns so that they can be addressed appropriately.

We will create this culture by:

- Ensuring staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others
- Empowering staff to share any low-level concerns in line with this policy
- Empowering staff to self-refer
- Addressing unprofessional behaviour and supporting the individual to correct it at an early stage
- Providing a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Helping to identify any weakness in the setting's safeguarding system

Responding to low-level concerns

Where this consultation results in the matter being considered to meet the harm/risk of harm threshold, this will warrant the Managing Allegations Against Staff and Volunteer procedures above to be followed.

If the concern is raised via a third party, the Principal will collect evidence where necessary by speaking:

- Directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously
- To the individual involved and any witnesses

The Principal will use the information collected to categorise the type of behaviour and determine any further action, in line with the setting's code of conduct. The Principal will be the ultimate decision-maker in respect of all low-level concerns, though they may wish to collaborate with the Deputy DSLs.

Record keeping

All low-level concerns will be recorded in writing. In addition to details of the concern raised, records will include the context in which the concern arose, any action taken and the rationale for decisions and action taken.

Records will be:

- Kept confidentially, held securely and comply with the DPA 2018 and UK GDPR
- Reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, we will decide on a course of action, either through our disciplinary procedures or, where a pattern of behaviour moves from a concern, to meeting the harm/risk of harm threshold, we will refer it to the LADO
- Retained at least until the individual leaves employment at the setting

Where a low-level concern relates to temporary staff or a contractor, we will notify the individual's employer, so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

References

We will not include low-level concerns in references unless:

- The concern (or group of concerns) has met the threshold for referral to the designated officer at the local authority and is found to be substantiated; and/or
- The concern (or group of concerns) relates to issues which would ordinarily be included in a reference, such as misconduct or poor performance

25. WHISTLEBLOWING

All staff have a responsibility to raise safeguarding concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the setting's safeguarding regime. This includes concerns that may be about the Deputy Head of School or Principal.
Staff should feel confident that concerns will be taken seriously and that they will be protected from detriment under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
Staff may raise concerns internally to the Deputy Head of School, Principal or Advisory Chair, or externally to the LADO or to Ofsted.
For further information, please refer to our Whistleblowing Policy.
Where a child is at immediate risk of harm, staff should contact children's social care or the police directly in line with the expectations of this procedure.

26. SIGNIFICANT EVENT NOTIFICATION TO OFSTED

As an Ofsted registered setting, we have a responsibility to notify Ofsted of any 'significant event'. Within the context of safeguarding, this includes to any event that is likely to affect an individual's continued suitability to care for or be in regular contact with children.

Ofsted guidance outlines examples of significant events within their guidance as including:

- involvement with safeguarding partners and statutory agencies about incidents or concerns that might affect someone's suitability, for instance child protection, welfare or safety investigations. These agencies and organisations could include: the police, Local Authority (and services within it), mental health services, drug/alcohol services, fire services, environmental health, and building control and planning departments

- a device containing children's information being stolen

- an incident where a child or children may have been at risk of harm, for example:
    - staff involved in a car accident when transporting children and the police are investigating a possible offence
    - a child being able to leave a setting or was missing for any period
    - a child not being adequately supervised (such as being left unattended in a car)
    - an unauthorised person gaining access to the childcare premises
- a staff member being the victim of a crime that occurred on the childcare premises, such as assault, harassment or vandalism
- any incidents of domestic abuse
- any incidents of self-harm or overdose
- any one-off or ongoing incidents on or around our premises that may affect children, such as violence, criminal or sexual exploitation and gangs, county lines activity, grooming and child trafficking
- significant changes to the health of staff that may affect their ability to care for children e.g. alcohol or substance dependency, a long-term condition that affects the physical ability to walk, balance, bend, kneel or lift a child or any other medical concerns, degenerative conditions or mental health conditions/disorders that may affect the individual's suitability to care for, or be in regular contact with, children.

Notification to Ofsted of significant events should take place as soon as reasonably possible, and no more than 14 days from when the event happened.

For more information, please refer to the guidance: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childcare-significant-events-to-notify-ofsted-about#examples-of-significant-events

27. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

To underpin the values and ethos of our setting and the intent to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded, this policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Health & Safety Policy
- Managing Allegations against Staff
- Medicine Policy
- Nappy Changing Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Food Policy
- Illness and Infectious Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Visitors to School Policy

28. LOCAL AUTHORITY DETAILS

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Single point of referral for Family Help, Child Protection and Adults' Safeguarding in Waltham Forest	Phone: 020 8496 2310 Mon-Thurs, 9am-5.15pm and Fri, 9am-5pm Out of Hours: 020 8496 3000 Email: MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk N.B.: If you cannot get through by phone, send an email with your contact details, and you a same-day phone response during normal business hours
LADO Team Allegations against staff and volunteers (ASV)	Phone: 020 8496 3646 Email: LADO@walthamforest.gov.uk N.B.: If you cannot get through by phone, send an email with your contact details, and you a same-day phone response during normal business hours
Safeguarding in Education Team Consultations / Training / Support (traded service)	Phone: 020 8496 3646 Email: safeguardingineducation@walthamforest.gov.uk N.B.: If you cannot get through by phone, send an email with your contact details, and you a phone response within 24 hours during normal business hours
Early Help	Phone: 020 8496 1517 Email: earlyhelp@walthamforest.gov.uk

Virtual School	Phone: 020 8496 1741 Email: virtual.school@walthamforest.gov.uk Head of Virtual School: fay.blyth@walthamforest.gov.uk
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Service [formerly known as Disability Enablement Service (DES)]	Phone: 020 8496 6503 Email: senteam@walthamforest.gov.uk
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service	Phone: 07494 280 073 Email: sendiasswalthamf@centre404.org.uk
Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Local Safeguarding Partners (LSPs)	Email: strategicpartnerships@walthamforest.gov.uk
Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) notifications	Phone: 020 8496 3691 Email: CDOP@walthamforest.gov.uk
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	Refer via MASHhttps://directory.walthamforest.gov.uk/kb5/walthamforest/directory/advice.page?id=HztR

Community Safety	Phone: 020 8496 3281 Email: vawg@walthamforest.gov.uk
Prevent Community Safety	Refer via MASH Phone: 020 8496 3000 Mob: 07816150037 Email: Prevent@walthamforest.gov.uk
Gangs Community Safety	Refer via MASH Email: communitysafety@walthamforest.gov.uk
Adolescent Safeguarding Lead Children's Social Care	Refer via MASH Email: Maximillen.Woods@walthamforest.gov.uk
Harmful Sexual Behaviour Lead Children's Social Care	Refer via MASH Email: tracey.goddard@walthamforest.gov.uk Tel: 020 8496 5027 Mob: 0797 476 8433
MARAC / DRM queries	Refer via MASH MASHrequests@walthamforest.gov.uk
Mental Health First Aid / Public Health	catherine.hutchinson@walthamforest.gov.uk
Private Fostering	Refer via MASH Email: charlotte.andrews@walthamforest.gov.uk Phone: 020 8496 1235 Mob: 07730 766 429

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) & Domestic Abuse one-stop-shop	Refer via MASH Email: vawg@walthamforest.gov.uk; domesticabuseadvice@walthamforest.gov.uk

APPENDIX ONE: TYPES OF ABUSE:

Abuse, a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Physical abuse indicators	
Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators
• Unexplained injuries – bruises / • abrasions / lacerations • The account of the accident may be vague or may vary from one telling to another. • Unexplained burns • Regular occurrence of unexplained injuries • Most accidental injuries occur on parts of the body where the skin passes over a bony protrusion.	• Withdrawn or aggressive behavioural extremes • Uncomfortable with physical contact • Seems afraid to go home • Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably • Wears clothing inappropriate for the weather, in order to cover body. • The interaction between the child and its carer

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- Not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Emotional abuse indicators	
Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators
• Poor attachment relationship • Unresponsive / neglectful behaviour towards the child's emotional needs • Persistent negative comments about the child. • Inappropriate or inconsistent expectations • Self-harm	• Low self-esteem • Unhappiness, anxiety • Withdrawn, insecure • Attention seeking • Passive or aggressive behavioural • extremes

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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 of clothing.
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Sexual abuse indicators	
Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators

• Sign of blood / discharge on the child's underclothing. • Awkwardness in walking / sitting • Pain or itching – genital area • Bruising, scratching, bites on the inner thighs / external genitalia. • Self-harm • Eating disorders • Enuresis / encopresis • Sudden weight loss or gain	• Sexually proactive behaviour or knowledge that is incompatible with the child's age & understanding. • Drawings & or written work that is sexually explicit • Self-harm / Suicide attempts • Running away • Substance abuse • Significant devaluing of self • Loss of concentration

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)

Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Child sexual and child criminal exploitation are forms of child abuse.

Neglect indicators	
Physical indicators	Behavioural indicators
• Unattended medical need • Underweight or obesity • Recurrent infection • Unkempt dirty appearance • Smelly • Inadequate / unwashed clothes • Consistent lack of supervision • Consistent hunger • Inappropriately dressed	• Poor social relationships • Indiscriminate friendliness • Poor concentration • Low self-esteem • Regularly displays fatigue or lethargic Frequently falls asleep in class • Frequent unexplained absences

APPENDIX TWO: FURTHER INFORMATION

Child Abduction and Community Safety Incidents

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends, and acquaintances); and by strangers.

Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a setting can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation.

As children get older and are granted more independence (for example, as they start walking to school on their own) it is important they are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe. Many schools provide outdoor-safety lessons run by teachers or by local Police staff.

It is important that lessons focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers. Further information is available at: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

CCE 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 and/or criminal activity:

- It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.
- through violence or the threat of violence

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if child does not view themselves as a victim. CCE does not always involve physical contact; they can also occur using technology.

CCE can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (see section below on County Lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket or to threaten other young people. Victims of CCE can be of any gender. Children and young people are often unwittingly drawn into criminal exploitation through the offer of friendship, relationships and care, gifts, drugs, alcohol, money and accommodation. Some of the following can be indicators of CCE.

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- children who misuse drugs and alcohol

- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE 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:

- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

CSE is often committed by someone known to the victim. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact; they can also occur using technology. Victims of CSE can be of any gender, under the age of 18, including 16 and 17 years old who can legally consent to have sex. It can include both contact and non-contact sexually activity and may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge. Some of the indicators of CCE can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- children who have older boyfriends/girlfriends
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant

Sexual exploitation is a serious crime and can have a long-lasting adverse impact on a child's physical and emotional health. It may also be linked to other criminal activity including trafficking and illegal drugs. Drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. The Department for Education have produced: Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners

County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims.

Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of settings (including special schools), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children's homes and care homes.

Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture

drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- Go missing (from school or home) and are subsequently found in areas away from their home.
- Have been the victim, perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g., knife crime)
- Are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs.
- Are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection.
- Are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity.
- Owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- Have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office and The Children's Society County Lines Toolkit For Professionals.

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding means that assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors which are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Staff will listen to children and be vigilant about any signs or indicators that would suggest children may be at risk in the community and will share intelligence with the Police in order to prevent children suffering harm. WMS will provide as much information as possible when asked to do so as part of a police investigation and/or when making referrals to Children's Social Care.

Children and the Court System

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. There are two age-appropriate guides to support children 5-11-year-olds and 12-17 year olds.

The guides explain each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children. The Ministry of Justice has launched an online child arrangements information tool with clear and concise information on the dispute resolution service. This may be useful for some parents and carers.

Children with a Parent or Carer in Custody

Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation, and poor mental health. The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

Cybercrime

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer). Cyber-dependent crimes include:

- Unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a school's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded.
- 'Denial of Service' (Dos or DDoS) attacks or 'booting'. These are attempts to make a computer, network, or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources.
- Making, supplying, or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets, and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above.

Children with particular skills and interest in computing and technology may inadvertently or deliberately stray into cyber-dependent crime.

If there are concerns about a child in this area, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy), should consider referring into the Cyber Choices programme. This is a nationwide Police programme supported by the Home Office and led by the National Crime Agency, working with regional and local policing. It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low-level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests.
Note that Cyber Choices does not currently cover 'cyber-enabled' crime such as fraud, purchasing of illegal drugs on-line and child sexual abuse and exploitation, nor other areas of concern such as on-line bullying or general on-line safety.
Additional advice can be found at: Cyber Choices, 'NPCC- When to call the Police' and National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.GOV.UK.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act introduced the first ever statutory definition of domestic abuse and recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children, as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members. The definition captures a range of different abusive behaviours, including physical, emotional and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour. Under the statutory definition, both the person who is carrying out the behaviour and the person to whom the behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and they must be "personally connected" (as defined in section 2 of the 2021 Act).

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. The government has issued statutory guidance to provide further information for those working with domestic abuse victims and perpetrators, including the impact on children.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'. Depending on the age of the young people, this may not be recognised in law under the statutory definition of 'domestic abuse' (if one or both parties are under 16). However, as with any child under 18, where there are concerns about safety or welfare, child safeguarding procedures should be followed and both young victims and young perpetrators should be offered support.

All concerns about children being affected by domestic abuse will be reported to the DSL as with any other safeguarding concern. The DSL will respond to the report by consulting Children's Social Care in order to establish whether a referral is required, or the situation should be managed by discussion with parents/carers and possibly the offer of family help.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Refuge runs the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, which can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which a safe time from the team for a call can be booked.

Additional advice on identifying children who are affected by domestic abuse and how they can be helped is available at:

- NSPCC- UK domestic-abuse Signs Symptoms Effects
- Refuge what is domestic violence/effects of domestic violence on children
- Safe Young Lives: Young people and domestic abuse | Safelives
- Domestic abuse: specialist sources of support (includes information for adult victims, young people facing abuse in their own relationships and parents experiencing child to parent violence/abuse)

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into Waltham Forest Children's Social Care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. The following factsheets usefully summarise the new duties: Homeless Reduction Act Factsheets. The new duties shift the focus to early intervention and encourages those at risk to seek support as soon as possible before they are facing a homelessness crisis.

In most cases staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year-olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Local authority Children's Social Care will be the lead agency for these children and the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have published joint statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.

Mental health

Where children have suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, attendance, and progress at school.

More information can be found in the Mental health and behaviour in schools' guidance which Early Years settings may wish to review alongside Public Health England's resources to support secondary school teachers to promote positive health, wellbeing, and resilience among children. See Every Mind Matters for links to all materials and lesson plans.

Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs.

Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the NRM is available in Statutory Guidance. Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims.

Preventing Radicalisation

Note: This preventing radicalisation section remains under review, following the publication of a new definition of extremism on the 14 March 2024.

Children may be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a schools or colleges safeguarding approach.

Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.

Radicalisation is the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence.

Terrorism is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use

or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.
Although there is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism, there are factors that may indicate concern.

it is possible to protect people from extremist ideologies and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being drawn to terrorism. As with other safeguarding risks, staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may need help or protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) making a Prevent referral.

The Prevent Duty

All settings are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

The Prevent duty should be seen as part of any setting's wider safeguarding obligations. Designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) and other senior leaders should familiarise themselves with the revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales, especially paragraphs 141-210, which are specifically concerned with schools (and covers childcare). The guidance is set out in terms of three general themes: leadership and partnership, capabilities and reducing permissive environments.

The setting's designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should be aware of local procedures for making a Prevent referral.

Channel

Channel is a voluntary, confidential support programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. Prevent referrals are assessed and may be passed to a multiagency Channel panel, which will discuss the individual referred to determine whether they are at risk of being drawn into terrorism and consider the appropriate support required. A representative from the setting may be asked to attend the Channel panel to help with this assessment.

An individual will be required to provide their consent before any support delivered through the programme is provided.

The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should consider if it would be appropriate to share any information with the new school or college in advance of a child leaving. For example, information that would allow the new school or college to continue supporting victims of abuse or those who are currently receiving support through the 'Channel' programme and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

Statutory guidance on Channel is available - Channel guidance.

Additional support

The Department has published further advice for those working in education settings with safeguarding responsibilities on the Prevent duty. The advice is intended to complement the Prevent guidance and signposts to other sources of advice and support.
The Home Office has developed three e-learning modules:

- Prevent awareness e-learning offers an introduction to the Prevent duty.
- Prevent referrals e-learning supports staff to make Prevent referrals that are robust, informed and with good intention.
- Channel awareness e-learning is aimed at staff who may be asked to contribute to or sit on a multi-agency Channel panel.

Educate Against Hate, is a government website designed to support teachers and leaders to help them safeguard their students from radicalisation and extremism. The platform provides free information and resources to help staff identify and address the risks, as well as build resilience to radicalisation.

Safeguarding and Prevent - The Education and Training Foundation (etfoundation.co.uk) provides online training modules for staff and managers, to support them in outlining their roles and responsibilities under the duty.

London Grid for Learning have also produced useful resources on Prevent (Online Safety Resource Centre - London Grid for Learning (lgfl.net).

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex from primary to secondary stage and into colleges. It can also occur online. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable.

It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Early Years settings should be aware of these risks and the possibility that siblings may be affected.

Serious Violence

Serious violence may involve physical assault, carrying, threatening with, or using weapons, often in the context of peer conflict or bullying, and it can also be associated with criminal exploitation. There are a number of indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include:

- Increased absence from school
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- A significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as:

- Being male
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school.
- Having experienced child maltreatment and having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

A fuller list of risk factors can be found in the Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy.

Professionals should also be aware that violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils are travelling to and from school. These times can be particularly risky for young people involved in serious violence.

Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance. The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) Toolkit sets out the evidence for what works in preventing young people from becoming involved in violence.

Home Office funded Violence Reduction Units (VRU) operate in the 20 Police force areas across England and Wales that have the highest volumes of serious violence, as measured by hospital admissions for injury with a sharp object. A list of these locations can be found here. As the strategic co-ordinators for local violence prevention, each VRU is mandated to include at least one local education representative within their Core Membership group, which is responsible for setting the direction for VRU activity. Schools and educational partners within these areas are encouraged to reach out to their local VRU, either directly or via their education Core Member, to better ingrain partnership working to tackle serious violence across local areas and ensure a joined-up approach to young people across the risk spectrum.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act introduced a new duty on a range of specified authorities, such as the Police, local government, youth offending teams, health, and probation services, to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans

to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities. Educational authorities and prisons/youth custody authorities will be under a separate duty to co-operate with core duty holders when asked, and there will be a requirement for the partnership to consult with all such institutions in their area.

Early Years settings should be aware of these risks and the possibility that siblings may be affected.

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

Early Years settings should be aware of these risks and the possibility that siblings may be affected.

Actions

If staff have a concern regarding a child who might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy). As appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with the Police and Waltham Forest Children's Social Care (or the relevant Local Authority where the child resides). Where FGM has taken place, since 31 October 2015 there has been a mandatory reporting duty placed on **teachers** that requires a different approach (see below).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

Early Years settings have a legal duty to protect all children in our care. This duty extends to protecting young girls and women from FGM, an illegal and extremely harmful practice and a form of abuse. All staff in our setting have received training to increase their awareness of the practice and harm FGM causes.

We recognise that children are at higher risk if FGM if this has already been carried out on their mother, sister or a member of their extended family (HM Government, 2016). In consideration of this we will always maintain a culture of vigilance.

Should a child in our care show any signs and symptoms of FGM or we have good reason to believe that the child is at risk of FGM, we will refer the child to Waltham Forest Childrens Social Care using our existing standard safeguarding procedures as it is a form of child abuse. However, should we think a child is in immediate danger we will contact the police on 999

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/female-genital-mutilation

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices to coerce a person into marriage. Schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has created: multi-agency practice guidelines: handling cases of forced marriage (chapter 8 provides guidance which focuses on the role of schools and colleges) and, multi-agency statutory guidance for dealing with forced marriage, which can both be found at the right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage. School and college staff can contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information: Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email fmu@fcdo.gov.uk.

In addition, since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats, or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.

Early Years settings should be aware of these risks and the possibility that siblings may be affected.