**Principle**

Little Buds is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children; promoting their rights and best interests.

This policy outlines the protection of children by identifying clear instructions in accordance with the legislative framework of The Children (NI) Order 1995, taking into consideration the five main principles of the Order, the first being “the welfare of the child is paramount”.

**Policy**

Everyone at Little Buds who comes into contact with children and their families have a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At Little Buds management/staff/volunteers will work with children, parents/carers and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

* Little Buds promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, culture traditions and home background.
* Little Buds promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
* Little Buds promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
* Little Buds helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
* Little Buds works with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

Procedure

In accordance with Trust Guidelines, Our Duty to Care and Social Services at **Little Buds** we will endeavor to safeguard children by:

***Key commitment 1***

Little Buds is committed to building a culture of safety in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

*Staff/Students/Trainees and Volunteers*

* Our Designated Child Protection Officer is: Briege Delaney 07842677639
* Our Deputy Child Protection Officer (playgroup) is: Miss Maura McCleary 028 37518587

At Little Buds we endeavor to ensure that:

* All staff and parents/carers are made aware of our safeguarding policy and procedures.
* Little Buds provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
* In the circumstances of a child with an additional need attending the playgroup or club, staff can change nappies, but only if there is an extreme need. If staff is not able to change the child, then parents will contacted to do so. For safety, children will be changed on the floor on a changing mat.
* Candidates are informed of the need to carry out 'enhanced disclosure' checks with the current up to date vetting procedures before posts can be confirmed. No person will be placed in a position (either paid or unpaid) which involves contact with children without being properly and effectively vetted.
* Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
* The setting adheres to the Health and Social Care Trust requirements in respect of references and criminal record checks for staff/students/trainees and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
* Students/trainees/volunteers do not work unsupervised.
* Little Buds adheres to the relevant guidelines in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
* Little Buds have a procedure for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
* There are security steps in place to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorized person has unsupervised access to the children.

***Key commitment 2***

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set out.

*Responding to suspicions of abuse*

* All those working with children are aware that abuse of children can take different forms – physical, emotional and sexual, as well as neglect and exploitation.
* When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or through changes in their appearance, their behavior, or their play.
* Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key worker/staff member makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the setting leader who is acting as the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
* Little Buds will refer concerns to the Gateway team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.
* Those involved will take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to children or by asking questions of children.

*The management team will use detailed procedures and reporting format when making a referral to Gateway.*

* Contact Early Years Link Social Worker/Early Years Team.
* Where a child is already known to Social Services and has a social worker, we will contact them directly.

Contact details are:

Gateway Team: 028 37567100

Social Services Early Years Team: 028 37564020

Police Telephone: 028 86766000

Out of hours Social Worker: 028 95049999

*Recording suspicions of abuse*

Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behavior, deterioration in general well-being, unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect, a member of staff will:

* Listen to the child, offer reassurance and give assurance that he/she will take action.
* Not question the child.
* Make a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
  + - the date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
    - the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible;
    - the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time;
    - the names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file which is kept securely and confidentially.

*Making a referral to Gateway*

* Little Buds will follow any procedures that the Gateway team has in place.
* Little Buds will also inform our link social worker that we have made a referral to the Gateway team.
* Where the child already has a social worker, Little Buds will contact them directly.
* Little Buds will retain a copy of any forms filled in for Gateway in the child's personal file.
* All staff is aware of the referral procedures for recording and reporting.

Contact details for Gateway Team are: Gateway Team, Armagh: 028 37415285

*Informing parents*

* Parents are normally the first point of contact.
* If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where guidance does not allow this.
* This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases the investigating officer will inform parents.

*Liaison with other agencies*

* Little Buds will work with the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.
* All staff is familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
* Little Buds has procedures for contacting the Health and Social Care Trust on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and the Trust to work well together.
* Little Buds will notify the Health and Social Care Trust of any incident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children.
* If a referral is to be made to the Gateway team, Little Buds will act within the area's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.

*Allegations against staff*

* Little Buds ensures that all parents know the complaints policy if they have concerns regarding the behavior or actions of staff/students/trainees/volunteers within the setting.
* Little Buds will follow the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust when responding to any complaint that a parent/carer has put forward.
* Little Buds will respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff, student/trainee/volunteer within the setting, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
* Management will refer any such complaint immediately to the Gateway team and the link social worker to investigate. Little Buds are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
* The Management of Little Buds will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the Gateway team/Early Years Team.
* Where the management team and Health and Social Care Trust agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, management will suspend the member of staff/volunteer/student/trainee, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as the children and families throughout the process.

*Disciplinary action*

* Where a member of staff/student/trainee/volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children, management will notify Gateway/Early Years and the Independent Safeguarding Authority of relevant information so that individuals who pose a threat to children (and vulnerable adults), can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

***Key commitment 3***

Little Buds are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout child protection training for staff. Little Buds are also committed to empowering young children, through our curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

*Training*

* Management will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognize the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and that they are aware of the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines for making referrals.
* Management will ensure that all staff knows the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting.
* Management will ensure that staff/volunteers are trained in Safeguarding Children/Child Protection in line with current regulations and this will be reviewed annually at staff appraisals where training needs can be identified.

*Planning*

* The layout of the room allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff/volunteer/students/trainees in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

*Curriculum*

* Little Buds introduces key elements of keeping children safe into our program to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and that they may develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
* Little Buds creates a culture of value and respect for every individual within the setting, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.

We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for all children.

*Confidentiality*

* All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust.

*Support to families*

* Little Buds believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff/students/trainees/volunteers in the group.
* Little Buds makes clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the Health and Social Care Trust.
* Little Buds follows child protection guidelines as set out by Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the setting’s designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
* Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.

Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCNI)

Little Buds are aware of the referral system of UNOCNI – Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland. The registering social worker and the Gateway Team will keep us informed of any changes and training available.

Contact details are:

Armagh Gateway: 028 37567100

Social Services: 028 37564020

Out of hours Social Worker: 028 95049999

## Procedures for staff reporting suspicions of abuse

In the event that a staff member has a concern about the practices of colleagues, parents or carers relating to the children in the setting, they must follow this procedure.

In the event that staff member has a concern about the practices of the leaser relating to the children in the setting, they must follow this procedure.

## Procedure for parents/carers to report suspicions of abuse

In the event that a parent/carer has a concern about the practices of staff or other parent/carers relating to the children in the setting, they must follow this procedure.

In the event that a parent/carer has a concern about the practices of the leader relating to the children in the setting, they must follow this procedure.

**Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the management team to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

This policy was adopted by Little Buds management team.

Signed: …………………………………………………………………………………..

(on behalf of the Management Team)

Position: …………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………………………………………………………………………..

Reviewed on:

Date: ……………………... Signed…………………………………………..

Date: ……………………... Signed …………………………………………..

Date: ……………………... Signed:…………………………………………..