



Child Protection Policy

This child protection policy and procedure forms part of our safeguarding children arrangements.

Aims

We consider that the welfare of the child is paramount and it is the duty of directors, staff and volunteers under HM Government's 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026' and the Department for Education's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026' to implement this policy, and to ensure that The Meadow has in place appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and young people and protect them from abuse.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is **Bon O'Hara**. Contact details for everyone named in this policy are in Appendix A.

Definitions of Abuse

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 recognises four categories of abuse:

Physical Abuse – actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual Abuse – actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The child may be dependent or developmentally immature. Sexual abuse also includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of sexual images.

Emotional Abuse – severe or persistent emotional ill treatment or rejection likely to cause adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including failure to thrive.

Historical Abuse

There may be occasions when a child will disclose abuse (either sexual, physical, emotional or neglect) which occurred in the past. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure of current child abuse. The reason for this is that the abuser may still represent a risk to children now.

Domestic Abuse

Staff may be working with children experiencing violence at home. Children experiencing this may demonstrate many of the signs listed under 'Protecting Children and Young People' below. Staff will need to treat them sensitively, record their concerns and pass them to the DSL, who will consider informing Children's Social Work Services.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female circumcision is illegal in the UK and it is an offence to take UK nationals abroad to aid, abet or carry out FGM. All agencies have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children from being abused through FGM. If staff are concerned that a girl is at risk of FGM this is a child protection issue and must be documented and reported to Children's Social Work Services and/or the police. Some warning signs that MAY indicate a girl is at risk of FGM include:

- Parents requesting an extended leave from school on top of school holidays
- If a girl comes from a country that has high prevalence of FGM
- Mother and other siblings have already undergone FGM
- Child may indicate that they are going for a special event

For more information on this topic, see the online South West Child Protection Procedures or contact the NSPCC. Contact details are in Appendix A.

The Prevent Duty

It is essential that staff members are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation, and know what to do when they are identified.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to a terrorist ideology. As with managing other safeguarding risks, staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. It is important to take action if staff observe behaviour of concern.

Any concerns will be passed to the DSL, who will refer them to Children's Social Work Services in the first instance and to Avon and Somerset Police on 101, who can refer to the Channel programme.

Confidentiality and Appropriate Disclosure of Information

Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships, but the welfare of the child is paramount. The law does not allow anyone to keep concerns relating to abuse to themselves. Therefore, confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the child.

All information that has been collected on any child will be kept locked and secure and access will be limited to the appropriate staff, management and relevant agencies.

In the event of an investigation it is essential that no information on child protection concerns relating to a child are disclosed inappropriately. Any such leaks could have serious consequences for both the child concerned and any investigation.

If uncertain about what information may be shared, we will take advice or refer to HM Government's 'Information sharing: advice for practitioners' (see Further Information).

Whilst parents / carers have the right to see any records kept on their child, this might not always be appropriate and we will not put the child or ourselves at risk.

It is very important that only those who need to know, actually know, to avoid rumour and gossip that could affect the child, parent / carer and the group.

Protecting Children and Young People

Recognising abuse is one of the first steps in protecting children and young people. There could be signs or behaviour that make you feel concerned. All staff should be alert to the following types of behaviour in the children:

- Becoming excessively aggressive, withdrawn or clingy.
- Seeming to be keeping a secret.
- Significant changes in children's behaviour.
- Deterioration in children's well-being.
- Unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect.
- Unreasonable fear of certain people or places.
- Acting out in an inappropriate way perhaps with adults, other children, toys or objects.
- Children's comments which give cause for concern, e.g.: inconsistent explanations of bruising, injuries or burns.
- Sexually explicit language or actions.
- Staff should be equally vigilant regarding signs relating to disabled children and not automatically assume that any of the above relates to their impairment.

Not all concerns about children or young people relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what we know about the child and their circumstances.

If we are worried, it is not our responsibility to investigate and decide if it is abuse. It is our responsibility to act on our concerns and do something about it.

If Abuse is Disclosed

The setting is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities in respect of child protection by treating any allegation seriously and sensitively.

We will:

- Stay calm.
- Listen to what the child / young person is actually saying.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling us.
- Not ask leading questions. Ensure that any questions asked are open or for clarification, not leading or closed questions. For example an open question is: Why are you upset? A closed question is: Are you afraid to go home because your Mum will hit you?
- Not ask the child / young person to repeat what they have said for another worker, as if the matter is to be investigated further it will be done so by trained professionals.
- Not promise the child that this can be kept secret, as subsequent disclosure could then lead to the child feeling betrayed. Explain that we are obliged to inform other people.
- Reassure the child that the people who will be informed will be sensitive to their needs and will be looking to help protect them. Inform them that it is not in their interests to keep the disclosure confidential and it will have to be passed on to the appropriate agencies.
- Make a note of any conversations with the child, trying to make these as detailed as possible, including when and where the conversations took place. Draw a diagram, if appropriate, to show

the position of any bruises or marks the child or young person shows us, trying to indicate the size, shape and colour.

- Record as soon as possible and use the actual words used by the child.
- Keep all records factual. Be aware of not making assumptions or interpretations of what the child / young person is telling us. Store all records securely.
- Discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Bon O'Hara. If the allegations implicate the DSL, the concerns should be discussed with Claire Imhasly (Manager and Director).
- If appropriate, inform parents / carers that we are going to report our suspicions / concerns. This might not always be possible and should not put the child or ourselves at risk. When you report an incident, the duty officer will ask if the parent / carer has been informed. If they haven't, they will want to know the reasons why.
- If possible, report this information to an appropriate agency. Children's Social Work Services will need to be informed (see Appendix A). We can contact them by phone or by using the online 'Report a concern about a child or young person' form (see link in 'Further Information'). They will assess the call and decide on the right response, which will be Children's Social Care if it is a child protection issue.
- If the young person has been placed with us by a school or the local authority, the DSL will also inform the commissioning school's DSL (or the placing officer) the same day.

The person to whom the disclosure was made should ensure that the child who has disclosed the information is informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect.

If Abuse is Suspected

The member of staff should keep monitoring the child's behaviour, making a note of any particular concerns (when, where and what happened).

Discuss concerns with the DSL. The child's parents / carers should be seen at the earliest opportunity to ascertain if there is a known reason for a change in behaviour (e.g. a change in family make-up, or the death of a family member or pet).

If abuse is taking place, we will not assume the parents/carers are causing it and keep an open mind. There may be other family members or friends or other individuals who are causing it.

Any member of staff or volunteer can contact the relevant agency (as listed in Appendix A) to discuss any concerns they have and seek guidance before actually reporting any child protection issues. It is appropriate to seek support from the DSL as to how to deal with situations and confirm appropriate action to take.

If we are still concerned about the welfare of the child/young person, this information must be passed on to the appropriate agency. It is important to remember that if we report concerns, we are not reporting the parents/carers – we are reporting to protect the welfare of the child.

If appropriate, inform parents / carers that we are going to report our suspicions / concerns. This might not always be possible and should not put the child or ourselves at risk. When we report an incident, Children's Social Work Services will ask if the parent / carer has been informed. If they haven't, they will want to know the reasons why.

Once we have made a referral, Children's Social Work Services should let us know that they are responding to what we have told them. It is unlikely that we will be told what action has been taken unless it has implications for the setting. If we have not heard from them, it may be appropriate to

contact them to ensure that the details we gave them have been taken into consideration and acted upon.

If it is an emergency

If we think a child is in immediate danger we will telephone the police on 999. In all other circumstances we need to refer the matter to Children's Social Work Services and follow the procedure described above.

In a medical emergency our first action may need to be one of the following:

- Telephone for an ambulance, or,
- Ask the parent to take the child to the hospital at once, or,
- Take the child ourselves.

The child is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer and they must be involved as soon as practical, unless to do so would put the child at immediate risk of harm. Having taken the necessary emergency action it is important that we make immediate contact with Children's Social Work Services.

Recognising inappropriate behaviour in staff, volunteers and other adults

There is no guaranteed way to identify a person who will harm children. However, there are possible warning signs. These may include:

- Paying an excessive amount of attention to a child or groups of children, providing presents, money or having favourites
- Seeking out vulnerable children, e.g. disabled children
- Trying to spend time alone with a particular child or group of children on a regular basis
- Making inappropriate sexual comments
- Sharing inappropriate images
- Being vague about where they have worked or when they have been employed
- Encouraging secretiveness

There may be other sources of concern; this is not a conclusive list. If a member of staff is concerned about another staff member or volunteer's behaviour they need to pass this on to the DSL. Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold ('low-level concerns') are still shared with the DSL and recorded.

If a Staff Allegation is made, or you Suspect a Member of Staff or Volunteer of Abuse or Inappropriate Behaviour

If it appears that a staff member or volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or,
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or,
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, or,
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children,

then these procedures must be followed:

- Record the concerns and report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will take steps to ensure that during the remainder of the working day that particular member of staff is not left in sole charge of the children or any child.
- At the earliest opportunity, inform Claire Imhasly (Manager and Director).

It may be clear in some cases, where a child has been injured and/or there is clear evidence of significant harm or risk of significant harm, that an immediate referral must be made to the police, Children's Social Work Services or emergency services. In addition, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) WITHIN 1 WORKING DAY of receiving the report of an allegation.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01225 396810 · LADO@bathnes.gov.uk

We then follow the LADO's advice on how to deal with allegations against staff. We will take advice from the LADO on how and when to inform the parents of the child.

If the concern is regarding the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the above procedure will be followed but the report will be made to Claire Imhasly (Manager and Director). If the concern is regarding Claire Imhasly, the report will be made to Debbie Forster (Director) and the LADO.

Support to Staff and Volunteers

The directors will fully support all members of staff in following this procedure.

Following an allegation or investigation:

- Staff and volunteers who work with issues of child protection may themselves need support in dealing with the emotional distress this can cause. They can talk to the DSL and any of the appropriate agencies listed in Appendix A.
- Staff, volunteers or directors may also be subject to allegations of abusing children in relation to their work for the setting. While support will be offered to these individuals by the setting, we will ensure that the agency dealing with the matter is given all assistance in pursuing any investigation and the B&NES LADO will be informed. The disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

Recruitment and employment of Staff and Volunteers

We acknowledge that people who pose a threat to children may be attracted to employment that allows them access to children and young people. As part of this policy we will ensure that people working with the children are safe to do so. Our full procedure is in our Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy.

All staff (including the setting's Manager) and volunteers in regulated activity will have an enhanced DBS check with a children's barred list check before they start, renewed every 3 years unless they are registered with the DBS Update Service. Supervised volunteers have an enhanced check without the barred list check.

All people connected with the setting must declare all convictions/cautions incurred since DBS disclosure which may affect their suitability to work with children.

Two references will be taken up prior to appointment for new staff and volunteers, and a short health questionnaire is completed.

All staff must undertake safeguarding training as part of their induction and keep it up to date, as set out in our Safeguarding Training Policy, so that they understand the setting's safeguarding/child protection policy and procedures.

The selection and interview procedure of the setting will be adhered to. This must include a full employment history, qualifications, interview and identity checks.

Providers must also meet their responsibilities under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 which includes a duty to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service where a member of staff is dismissed (or would have been had the person not left the setting first) because they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm.

Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras

This setting is aware of the risks associated with the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting. How we manage this is set out in our Safeguarding Policy.

Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers and directors within the setting recognise that they need to conduct themselves in an appropriate, open and transparent way to ensure a safer environment for all. One of the ways of ensuring this is by following the setting's policies and procedures, including:

- Safeguarding Policy and this Child Protection Policy
- Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Safeguarding Training Policy and Training and Development Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy, including first aid, fire, tool use and risk assessment
- Medication Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Equality, Diversity, Anti-discrimination, Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice
- Business Continuity Plan

In addition staff will use the Safer Recruitment Consortium's 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with children and young people in education settings' as a tool to develop setting specific guidance for staff and volunteers.

Further Information

- South West Child Protection Procedures – detailed online information on all aspects of child protection, including staff allegations: www.swcpp.org.uk
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- B&NES 'Report a concern about a child or young person' online form: <https://app.bathnes.gov.uk/webforms/concerned-about-a-child-or-family>
- Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services (HM Government): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice (Safer Recruitment Consortium): <https://www.saferrecruitmentconsortium.org>
- Prevent duty guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

Appendix A – Useful contacts

Who	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Bon O'Hara
Manager and Director	Claire Imhasly · themeadowbath@gmail.com · 07411 865399
Director (for concerns about the Manager)	Debbie Forster
B&NES Children's Social Work Services – the place to call if you are concerned about a child or young person	01225 396111 or 01225 477929 (8.30am–5pm Mon–Thu, 8.30am–4.30pm Fri)
Children who already have a social worker	Contact that worker or team, or ChildCare_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk
Disabled Children's Team	01225 396967
Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)	01454 615165
Local Authority Designated Officer (staff allegations)	01225 396810 · LADO@bathnes.gov.uk
Police	999 in an emergency · 101 non-emergency (also for Prevent and Channel referrals)
South West Child Protection Procedures (online guidance)	www.swcpp.org.uk
Childline	0800 1111 (open 24 hours)
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000 · help@nspcc.org.uk
NSPCC FGM Helpline	0800 028 3550 · fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

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