



Registered Charity Number 1122298

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

This policy and procedure has been adopted by Grove Cottage through its Trustees Committee which remains responsible for its review.

Original signed version is kept at the Grove Cottage office.

Signed: *Kevin Davis*

Date: September 2025

Name: Kevin Davis

Chair of Trustees

Reviewed: September 2025

Next review: August 2026

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1.0 GUIDANCE

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- 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 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
- Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework

(Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE 2023 p. 7&8)

This Child Protection Policy forms part of a suite of documents and policies which relate to the safeguarding responsibilities of Grove Cottage. This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behavioural Management and Anti Bullying Policy
- Confidentiality Policy & Procedure
- Information Technology, Personal Internet Presence & Social Networking Policy
- Employees Handbook/Code of Conduct
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

1.1 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Trustees, staff, volunteers and contractors when undertaking work either paid or voluntary on behalf of Grove Cottage.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy & Procedure is to:

Inform staff, parents, volunteers, and trustees about Grove Cottage's responsibilities for safeguarding children.

To enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

1.3 MISSION STATEMENT

Our Staff and volunteers are particularly well placed to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour and failure to develop because they have regular contact with children. It is our ethos that:

- Safeguarding is embedded in all aspects of Grove Cottage's work.

- All staff at Grove Cottage understand the importance of safeguarding and know how to respond appropriately to concerns.
- Grove Cottage understands and fulfils our role of working with other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk.
- Grove Cottage complies with legal, regulatory and contractual responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.
- Staff members working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' and 'it could be happening to this child', where safeguarding is concerned. When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff members should always act in the best interests of the child.

1.4 Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Child Protection Policy

- The policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Safeguarding Committee. It will be implemented through our induction and training programme, and as part of day-to-day practice. Compliance with the policy will be monitored by the DSL and through staff performance measures.
- In addition, all staff members will complete level 2 online training, receive safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings), as required, to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

2.0 STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

To safeguard and promote the welfare of children, Grove Cottage will act in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework Documentation 2025
- Education Act 2002 (Section 175/157)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2025)
- Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual (Electronic)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2023)
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Section 26, The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (PREVENT duty)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (Section 74, Serious Crime Act 2015)

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 (makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry. Includes taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place).
- Serious Violence Strategy 2018
- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty)
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (DfE 2021)
- Children and Families Act and SEND Code of Practice 2014
- Childcare Act 2006
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Every Child Matters 2003
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018

3.0 DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD

The Board of Trustees have appointed a Safeguarding Trustee and senior staff to the role of DSL and deputies. During operating hours, a DSL or deputy will always be available to discuss any safeguarding concerns. The DSL will undertake formal training every two years. The DSL will also take Prevent Awareness training. In addition to this training the DSL will regularly read and digest safeguarding developments to update their knowledge

SAFEGUARDING DESIGNATED LEADS

Trustee

Karen Wallace

Mobile 07427 685773

safeguarding@mencapgrovecottage.org

Department Leads

Nursery Designated Lead

Maria Sims, Nursery Manager

Mobile 07734 257223

Email: nursery@mencapgrovecottage.org

Nursery Designated Deputy

Jo Frost, SENCO

Mobile 07734 257223

Email: senco@mencapgrovecottage.org

Club Designated Lead

Charlotte Jess, Operations Manager

Mobile 07482 535020

Email: om@mencapgrovecottage.org

Saturday Designated Deputies

Mel Mose

Mobile 07871735144

Email cottagecrew@mencapgrovecottage.org

Lynne White

Email: l.white@mencapgrovecottage.org

Mobile 07519601444 (Cottage Kids number)

The DSL attends formal training specific to their safeguarding role and duties at least every two years. They should also undertake Prevent Awareness training every 3 years.

The DSL (DDSL) will:

- Ensure all staff including part time, contractors, volunteers, and supply staff have access to, and understands our child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff.
- Work with the Safeguarding Committee and Board of Trustees to ensure the child protection policy is reviewed annually, and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly.
- Ensure the safeguarding and child protection policy is available publicly via our website.

4. THE MANAGEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING

Grove Cottage Board of Trustees comply with their duties under legislation.

All trustees receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training. This training equips them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole organisation approach to safeguarding. Their training should be regularly updated.

The nominated trustee for child protection is:

Karen Wallace - safeguarding@mencapgrovecottage.org

The nominated deputy trustee for child protection is:

Kevin Davis - kevin@mencapgrovecottage.org

Trustees should ensure that the policies and procedures, (particularly those concerning referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect), are understood and followed by staff.

Trustees are aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Grove Cottage Trustees will ensure that our organisation contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance [Working together to safeguard children](#)

4.1 Whole organisation approach to safeguarding

- Trustees ensure they facilitate a whole organisation approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in Grove Cottage and ensuring that safeguarding, and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern, leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

4.2 Information Sharing

- Trustees should ensure relevant staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

This includes:

- being confident of the processing conditions which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information, which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as '*special category personal data*'
- understanding that 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner. It would be legitimate to share information without consent where: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; and, if to gain consent would place a child at risk, and
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do 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 safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

4.3 Staffing

- Governing bodies must ensure staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Staff must have appropriate qualifications and staff ratios are always met in line with the statutory Early Years framework 2025.
- Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that **all** staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training. The training should be regularly updated. Induction and training should be in line with any advice from the safeguarding partners (HSCP).
- All staff should receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, staff meetings) as required, and at least annually.
- Our Trustees recognise the expertise staff build by undertaking safeguarding training and from managing safeguarding concerns on a daily basis. Opportunity should therefore be provided for staff to contribute to, and shape, safeguarding arrangements and the child protection policy.

4.4 IT monitoring

- Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Considerations for Managers 2019 [Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations for managers – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations-for-managers)

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that children are taught about how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. It should be recognised that effective education will be tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of individual children, including children who are victims of abuse, and children with special educational needs or disabilities.

4.5 Visitors

- All visitors to the Nursery and Children's clubs will need to sign in and out of a visitor book given a visitor lanyard.
- Visitors will have to turn their phones off or leave them in a staff only area.

- Visitors must be accompanied when walking around the building.
- Visitors will not be left alone with the children and will not be able to accompany children to the changing room or be involved in any toileting of the children.

5.0 TYPES OF ABUSE

All staff will undergo Safeguarding training with all areas of abuse are made aware to them. The main areas of abuse being: -

Physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse, Neglect and Domestic Abuse, all staff are aware of radicalisation. Staff through this will be trained to “**recognise, respond and refer**” as per Herts LCSB.

Knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect. All staff should be aware of the indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection.

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. 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	
A form of abuse which 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.	
Child	
Bruises – shape, grouping, site, repeat or multiple	Withdrawal from physical contact
Bite-marks – site and size Burns and Scalds – shape, definition, size, depth, scars	Aggression towards others, emotional and behaviour problems
Improbable, conflicting explanations for injuries or unexplained injuries	Frequently absent from school
Untreated injuries	Admission of punishment which appears excessive

Injuries on parts of body where accidental injury is unlikely	Fractures
Repeated or multiple injuries	Fabricated or induced illness -
Parent	Family/environment
Parent with injuries	History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence.
Evasive or aggressive towards child or others	Past history in the family of childhood abuse, self-harm, somatising disorder or false allegations of physical or sexual assault
Explanation inconsistent with injury	Marginalised or isolated by the community.
Fear of medical help / parents not seeking medical help	Physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement.
Over chastisement of child	

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It 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.
- It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability,
- as well as over protection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying),
- causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger,
- or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Child

Self-harm	Over-reaction to mistakes / Inappropriate emotional responses
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Chronic running away	Abnormal or indiscriminate attachment
Drug/solvent abuse	Low self-esteem
Compulsive stealing	Extremes of passivity or aggression
Makes a disclosure	Social isolation – withdrawn, a ‘loner’ Frozen watchfulness particularly pre school
Developmental delay	Depression
Neurotic behaviour (e.g., rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking)	Desperate attention-seeking behaviour
Parent	Family/environment
Observed to be aggressive towards child or others	Marginalised or isolated by the community.
Intensely involved with their children, never allowing anyone else to undertake their child's care.	History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence.
Previous domestic violence	History of unexplained death, illness, or multiple surgery in parents and/or siblings of the family
History of abuse or mental health problems	Past history in the care of childhood abuse, self-harm, somatising disorder or false allegations of physical or sexual assault
Mental health, drug or alcohol difficulties	Wider parenting difficulties
Cold and unresponsive to the child's emotional needs	Physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement.
Overly critical of the child	Lack of support from family or social network.

Neglect

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, for example, as a result 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); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

Child	
Failure to thrive - underweight, small stature	Low self-esteem
Dirty and unkempt condition	Inadequate social skills and poor socialisation
Inadequately clothed	Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school
Dry sparse hair	Abnormal voracious appetite at school or nursery
Untreated medical problems	Self-harming behaviour
Red/purple mottled skin, particularly on the hands and feet, seen in the winter due to cold	Constant tiredness
Swollen limbs with sores that are slow to heal, usually associated with cold injury	Disturbed peer relationships
Parent	
Failure to meet the child's basic essential needs including health needs	Marginalised or isolated by the community.
Leaving a child alone	History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence.
Failure to provide adequate caretakers	History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgery in parents and/or siblings of the family
Keeping an unhygienic dangerous or hazardous home environment	Past history in the family of childhood abuse, self-harm, somatising disorder or false allegations of physical or sexual assault
Unkempt presentation	Lack of opportunities for child to play and learn
Unable to meet child's emotional needs	Dangerous or hazardous home environment including failure to use home safety equipment; risk from animals
Mental health, alcohol or drug difficulties	

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 or not 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.

They may also include 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. Sexual abuse can take place online and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.	
Child	
Self-harm - eating disorders, self-mutilation and suicide attempts	Poor self-image, self-harm, self-hatred
Running away from home	Inappropriate sexualised conduct
Reluctant to undress for PE	Withdrawal, isolation or excessive worrying
Pregnancy	Sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate to age/stage of development, or that is unusually explicit
Inexplicable changes in behaviour, such as becoming aggressive or withdrawn	Poor attention / concentration (world of their own)
Pain, bleeding, bruising or itching in genital and /or anal area	Sudden changes in schoolwork habits, become truant
Sexually exploited or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners	
Being absent from education	Being absent, as well as missing, from education can be warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation
Parent	Family/environment
History of sexual abuse	Marginalised or isolated by the community.
Excessively interested in the child.	History of mental health, alcohol or drug misuse or domestic violence.
Parent displays inappropriate behaviour towards the child or other children	History of unexplained death, illness or multiple surgery in parents and/or siblings of the family
Conviction for sexual offences	Past history in the care of childhood abuse, self-harm, somatising disorder or false allegations of physical or sexual assault
Comments made by the parent/carer about the child.	Grooming behaviour
Lack of sexual boundaries	Physical or sexual assault or a culture of physical chastisement.

5.1 Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Grove Cottage is an organisation with specific responsibilities for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or certain medical or physical health conditions. Staff must be aware these children can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. Barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

This can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's impairment without further exploration.
- These children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- The potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in school or college or the consequences of doing so.

5.2 PREVENT: Safeguarding Children and Young People from Radicalisation

- Children can be vulnerable to extreme ideologies and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harm and abuse, protecting children from radicalisation must be part of all safeguarding approaches.
- There are signs and vulnerability factors that may indicate a child is susceptible to radicalisation or is in the process of being radicalised. It is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist thinking and intervene to safeguard those at risk of radicalisation. Staff must be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of Prevent support. They must act proportionately to the concern using the Prevent 'notice, check, share' approach, which may lead to the DSL making a Prevent referral.
- Local Hertfordshire County Council guidance on Prevent is featured in the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership CP procedures [Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership | Hertfordshire County Council](#) which outlines the specific duties in Hertfordshire.

5.3 Domestic Abuse

- Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

5.4 Child-on-Child Abuse

- All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. All staff should be clear of the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it.
- All staff should understand that even if there are no reports in our setting it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported. As such it is

important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to their designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

5.5 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

- Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

5.6 Mental Health

- All staff should be aware 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. Education 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.
- If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following this policy, and speaking to the DSL or a DDSL.

5.7 Departmental advice What to Do if You Are Worried a Child is Being Abused –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused-2> Advice for Practitioners provides more information on understanding and identifying abuse and neglect. Examples of potential indicators of abuse and neglect are highlighted throughout the advice and will be particularly helpful for school and college staff. The NSPCC website also provides useful additional information on abuse and neglect and what to look out for.

Staff should not assume a colleague, or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. They should be mindful that early information sharing is vital for effective identification, assessment and allocation of appropriate service provision.

5.8 Any child may benefit from early help, but all staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs.
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has a mental health need.
- is a young carer.
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines.
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation.
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- has a family member in prison or is affected by parental offending.
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol

misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse.

- is misusing alcohol and other drugs themselves.
- has returned home to their family from care.
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is a privately fostered child, and
- is persistently absent from education.

If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately. If staff have a concern, they should follow this policy and speak to the DSL/DDSL. The DSL/DDSL are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to a safeguarding concern.

5.9 Children who may require early help (known as Families First in Hertfordshire)

- Families First is Hertfordshire's strategy for early help for families. A directory of early help services is available at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/familiesfirst which will help practitioners and families find information and support to prevent escalation of needs and crisis.
- All staff should be aware of the early help process, and understand their role in identifying emerging problems, sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment of a child's needs. It is important for children to receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. This also includes staff monitoring the situation and feeding back to the DSL any ongoing/escalation of concerns so that consideration can be given to a Child Protection Contact Referral to Children's Services if the child's situation doesn't appear to be improving.
- If early help is appropriate, the DSL or a DDSL will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up a Families First Assessment as appropriate.

5.10 A child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding.

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, each professional should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.
- Grove Cottage and their staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is based on the principle of providing help for families to stay together where it is safe for the children to do so, and looking at alternatives where it is not, whilst always acting in the best interests of the child.

6.0 RESPONDING TO SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

- The first concern will be the child. Changes in behaviour/appearance will be investigated and observed. The child's name, address, age, dates and times of observations will be noted on the observation records. All records will be kept confidential and kept in the lockable filing cabinet. However, Ofsted will need to be informed of any incidents within one day along with any paperwork.

- The child will be reassured and helped to understand that they themselves are valued and respected.
- Continued support will be given to the family, while the situation is investigated.
- Parents will normally be the first point of reference, but if they are not in a position to allay any legitimate anxieties, the matter will be taken up with Children's Services who's contact details are: - **Children's Services : 0300 123 4043**
- We can also refer to the **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)**, a multi-agency team working alongside the Customer Service Centre Team. Cases are referred to the MASH team where there is a clear child protection concern.
- In extreme cases where immediate action is required the police must also be called, and the child, teenager, must remain at the setting with two members of staff.
- Police telephone: **999**

7.0 DEALING WITH A DISCLOSURE

If a child confides in a member of staff/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff/volunteer tell the child in a manner appropriate to the child's age/stage of development that they cannot promise complete confidentiality – instead they must explain that they may need to pass information to other professionals to help keep the child or other children safe. **If a child discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the member of staff/volunteer should:**

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what is being said.
- Allow the child to talk freely.
- Reassure the child but not make promises which might not be possible to keep.
- Never promise a child that they will not tell anyone - as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
- Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault.
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell.
- Listen, only asking questions when necessary to clarify what is being said.
- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.
- Complete a Record of Concern

Pass the information to the DSL without delay (if a DSL or DDSL is not available, staff must inform a senior member of staff or complete a child protection contact referral if this disclosure indicates that the child may be at risk of immediate harm and/or have been suffered significant harm to ensure reporting to Police and/or Children's Services where necessary is not delayed)

Support- Dealing with a disclosure from a child, and safeguarding issues can be stressful. The member of staff/volunteer should, therefore, consider seeking support for him/herself and discuss this with the DSL.

8.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES

- If any member of staff is concerned about a child, he or she must inform the DSL. The DSL will decide whether the concerns should be raised to Children's Services and if deemed to have met the threshold for a Child Protection Contact Referral to be completed. If a Child Protection Contact Referral to Children's Services is made the DSL will discuss the referral with the parents, unless to do so would place the child at further risk of harm.
- While it is the DSL's role to make Child Protection Contact Referrals, any staff member can make a Child Protection Contact Referral to Children's Services if a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm (e.g. concern that a family might have plans to carry out FGM, Forced Marriage etc). In these circumstances a Child Protection Contact Referral should be made to Children's Services and/or the Police immediately. Where Child Protection Contact Referrals are made by another member of staff, the DSL should be informed as soon as possible.
- If a member of staff (persons employed or engaged to carry out teaching work at schools and other institutions in England), in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 they must report this to the police via 101. **This is a mandatory reporting duty. KCSiE (DfE 2025) pg. 162**
- If the allegations raised are against other children, the school should follow section 5.1.17 of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual – Children Who Abuse Others. Please see our Behaviour anti-bullying policy for more details on procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse.
- The member of staff must record information regarding the concerns on the same day. The recording must be a clear, precise and a factual account of any verbal disclosures and observations.
- Particular attention should be paid to the attendance and development of any child about whom the organisation has concerns, or who has been identified as being the subject of a Child Protection Plan and a written record will be kept.
- If a pupil who is/or has been the subject of a child protection plan changes setting, the DSL will inform the social worker responsible for the case and transfer the appropriate records to the DSL at the receiving setting, in a secure manner, and separate from the child's academic file.
- The DSL is responsible for making the Board of Trustees aware of trends in behaviour that may affect pupil welfare. If necessary, training will be arranged.

8.1 Notifying Ofsted

Grove Cottage will inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by anyone living, working, or looking after children at the premises. This must happen whether the allegations of harm or abuse are alleged to have been committed on the premises or elsewhere, for example, on a visit. Grove Cottage will also notify Ofsted Under section 175(4) of the Education Act 2002. 24 of the action they have taken in response to the allegations. Ofsted must be notified as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event

within 14 days of the allegations being made. A registered provider who, without a reasonable excuse, fails to do this, commits an offence. (EYFS framework 2025 pg23)

8.2 Record Keeping

All practitioners should be confident of the processing conditions under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information, which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing. If in doubt about recording requirements staff should discuss with the DSL. Staff will:

- Record as soon as possible after the conversation. Use the schools Child Protection Recording system which may be electronic or using a record of concern sheet (pro-forma available on the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning).
- Ensure the date, time, place is recorded, and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.
- Use the proforma body map available, to indicate the position of any injuries and a clear description of the injury.
- Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions.
- Do not destroy the original records in case they are needed by a court.

All records need to be given to the DSL promptly. No copies should be retained by the member of staff or volunteer.

9.0 CONFIDENTIALITY

Safeguarding children raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all staff/volunteers.

- All staff, both member facing and non-member facing staff, have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies.
- Staff/volunteers who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts.

10.0 COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Grove Cottage will ensure the Child Protection Policy is available publicly via our website.

Parents should be informed prior to a Child Protection Contact Referral, unless it is considered to do so might place the child at increased risk of significant harm by:

- The behavioural response it prompts e.g. a child being subjected to abuse, maltreatment or threats/forced to remain silent if alleged abuser informed.
- Leading to an unreasonable delay.

- Leading to the risk of loss of evidential material.

Grove Cottage may also consider not informing parent(s) where this would place a member of staff at risk. Staff will endeavour to ensure that parents understand the responsibilities placed on the Grove Cottage staff for safeguarding children.

Where reasonably possible, Grove Cottage will hold more than one emergency contact number for each child.

Further guidance around information sharing can be located within; Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (DfE, 2024);

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

11.0 ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE MADE AGAINST ADULTS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

An allegation/safeguarding concern is any information which indicates that a member of staff/volunteer/contractor may have:

- 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 which indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicated they may not be suitable to work with children.

This relates to members of staff, supply staff, volunteers and contractors who are currently working in Grove Cottage regardless of where the alleged abuse took place. Allegations against staff/volunteer/contractor who is no longer working should be referred to the police. Historical allegations of abuse should also be referred to the police.

If staff have safeguarding concerns, or an allegation is made about another member of staff (including supply staff, volunteers and contractors) posing a risk of harm to children, this is to be referred to the Manager. This includes allegations reported or made by a child, parent, or member of the public.

Where the Manager is the subject of an allegation or safeguarding concerns, this to be referred to the Safeguarding Trustee.

Karen Wallace safeguarding@mencapgrovecottage.org **Mobile 07427 685773**

Staff may consider discussing any concerns with the DSL and if appropriate make any referral via them.

The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. They should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification; it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised, and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

11.1 Reporting

Actions to be taken include making an immediate written record of the allegation using the informant's words – including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, brief details of what happened, what was said and who was present. This record should be signed, dated and immediately passed on to the Manager.

The recipient of an allegation must **not** unilaterally determine its validity, and failure to report it in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

The DSL/Chair of Trustees will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but will assess whether it is necessary to refer the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer. LADO Threshold Guidance may be used to inform this decision – found at

[lado-threshold.pdf](#)

Children's Services – 0300 123 4043

SOOHS (Out of Hours Service-Children's Services) – 0300 123 4043

This number is displayed on our safeguarding contacts list displayed throughout the building.

If the allegation meets any of the four criteria set out at the start of this section, contact should always be made with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) without delay and within 24 hours in line with HSCP CP procedures.

If it is decided that the allegation requires a child protection strategy meeting or a joint evaluation meeting, this will take place in accordance with section 5.1.5 of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures Manual.

If it is decided it does not require a child protection strategy meeting or joint evaluation meeting, the LADO will provide the employer with advice and support on how the allegations should be managed.

The DSL should, as soon as possible, **following briefing** from the LADO inform the subject of the allegation.

11.2 Concerns that do not meet the 'harm threshold'

Grove Cottage may also need to take action in response to 'low-level' concerns about staff.

What is a low-level concern?

A low-level concern is any concern that an adult has acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work.
- doesn't meet the threshold of harm or is not considered serious enough for the school or college to refer to the local authority.

Low-level concerns are part of a spectrum of behaviour. This includes:

- inadvertent or thoughtless behaviour
- behaviour that might be considered inappropriate depending on the circumstances.
- behaviour which is intended to enable abuse.

Examples of such behaviour could include:

- being over friendly with children
- having favourites
- adults 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
- using inappropriate sexualised, intimidating, or offensive language.

Grove Cottage has an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about all adults working in or on behalf of the school/college are dealt with promptly and appropriately; this enables us to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early, minimise the risk of abuse and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of Grove Cottage are clear about and act within appropriate professional boundaries, and in accordance with our ethos and values.

- A 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant; a low-level concern is any concern that an adult working in or on behalf of the school/college may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with our staff behaviour policy/code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and does not meet the 'harm threshold' or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.
- Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from several sources. For example, suspicion, complaints, or allegations made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation, or because of vetting checks.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly, recorded and dealt with appropriately to protect staff from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

Low-level concerns should be shared confidentially and in line with staff code of conduct.

12.0 WHISTLE BLOWING

Whistle Blowing is a term used for an employee, raising concerns about practices and procedures used in their workplace, without fear of repercussions. This may take place when the person offending is the manager or the designated safeguarding lead. All staff should report any concerns in good faith that they have regarding inappropriate behaviour or actions of colleagues. For staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally can contact the following advice lines.

Ofsted Whistle Blowing: -	0300 123 3155	whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
NSPCC Whistle blowing advice Line	0800 0280 285*	help@nspcc.org.uk

13.0 RECRUITMENT

All applicants who work within Grove Cottage, whether voluntary or paid, will be interviewed before an appointment is made. Shortlisted applicants will be informed in advance if online checks will be carried out during the recruitment process. During this process applicants will be asked if they or any of their family or partner has had any allegation made against them, this information may not necessarily prevent them from working at Grove Cottage. However, if allegations have been made against the applicant the position can be refused. They will be asked to disclose any convictions, court orders, reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment within the setting).

No one will have unsupervised contact with the children or adults, until their records have been checked.

All applicants will be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service. This will be checked every three years. Staff will also be asked to join the DBS Update Service and under the new definition of a "Regulated activity" will continue to be eligible for an enhanced disclosure with barred list.

All applicants will have to provide two references to support their application.

All gaps in employment will be accounted for.

In the case of a new manager being appointed this procedure will be carried out by Grove Cottage Board of Trustees.

This information will be recorded and kept in a personnel file for each member of staff. Their disclosure number, date of disclosure and name of who obtained this information will be stored on a data base. DBS checks will be carried out every three years.

14.0 STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION

All staff will have regular supervisions and/or annual appraisals.

Supervision should provide opportunities for staff to discuss any issues they may have concerning children's development or wellbeing. Identify solutions to address issues as they arise and receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness.

15.0 INDUCTION

All new employees will begin with a probation period of three months in which to settle in and understand the standards and rules of the setting. During this time, they will be allowed to work fully within the setting.

16.0 CODES OF CONDUCT

In addition to observing the provisions of this Policy and Procedure, all Trustees, staff and volunteers must complete an *Annual Staff Declaration*.

SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS

<u>Trustee</u>	Karen Wallace Mobile 07427 685773 safeguarding@mencapgrovecottage.org
<u>Department Leads</u>	
Nursery Designated Lead	Maria Sims , Nursery Manager Mobile 07734 257223 Email: nursery@mencapgrovecottage.org
Nursery Designated Deputy	Jo Frost , SENCO Mobile 07734 257223 Email: senco@mencapgrovecottage.org
Club Designated Lead	Charlotte Jess , Operations Manager Mobile 07482 535020 Email: om@mencapgrovecottage.org
<u>Saturday</u> Designated Deputies	Mel Mose Mobile 07871735144 Email cottagecrew@mencapgrovecottage.org Lynne White Email: l.white@mencapgrovecottage.org Mobile 07519601444 (Cottage Kids number)