



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Allegations against a Staff Member Policy

This policy sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of child protection allegations being made against a member of staff:

1. We acknowledge that there is always a possibility that a member of staff may face a child protection allegation, for any number of reasons. It is also acknowledged that this can result in delicate, uncomfortable and often difficult situations where the allegations have been made against a colleague, and this policy sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure that child protection procedures are followed in an objective, professional and fair manner. The over-riding priority in such cases will be safeguarding and protection of the child's welfare.
2. When the allegation is made against a staff member the Leader must be informed immediately. Then the Leader will take action as set out in this policy.
3. The Leader will contact the Management Committee Chairperson and if a child protection issue is alleged, the child protection Designated Officer on the Committee will also be contacted.
4. The Leader and Designated Officer will meet the parents/guardians to discuss the complaint, in order to gather as much information as possible and to ensure that all relevant issues are completely clear. The Leader will not attempt to conduct any sort of investigation.
5. The Leader will then inform Gateway team (Social Services).
6. Depending upon the nature of the complaint the Leader and Designated Officer will interview the accused person to hear his/her side of the story. NB if the complaint involves alleged sexual abuse the Leader will not interview the person concerned and will not alert him/ her to the concerns until Social Services and/or the police have been consulted.
7. According to the nature of the allegations the Leader will contact the Gatewayteam (Social Services) and/ or the police. These organisations will then give advice on the best course of action to take in the short term.
8. The Leader and Designated Officer will keep clear written records of all discussions and observations involving the complaint, the accused person, and any other persons interviewed.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

9. It is the responsibility of the Leader and Designated Officer to remain focussed and completely objective regarding the allegation made. It must be borne in mind that there is the possibility that the person being accused is a risk to children, and immediate safeguards must be put in place. Following advice from the Gateway Team (Social Services) and or the police, the accused person should be suspended from all duties with immediate effect. It should be explained to the person that this does not in any way imply guilt but allows an independent investigation to proceed unhindered. It must be explained to the accused person that he/she should not attempt to contact the Playgroup or other staff in any way while the investigation is in process.

10. The Leader and Designated Officer will have protocols for dealing with the following issues regarding the sudden absence of the suspended person from work. In all cases the right of the accused person, together with appropriate issues of confidentiality will be respected:
 - communicating with parent/guardians
 - communicating the facts to other staff members and maintaining a morale
 - What and how to inform children when asked why the accused staff member is missing
 - Maintenance of staffing level and ratios within the setting
 - Handling the media in the event that the situation reaches that point
 - Liaising with Gateway team(Social Services) and the police, as appropriate.

11. The Leader and Designated Officer will maintain close contact with the Gateway team (Social Services) and/ or the police while the investigation is proceeding, and the accused person will be kept informed as to progress at regular intervals. The information to be given to the person will have been previously discussed and agreed with appropriate investigating agencies.

12. At the conclusion of the investigation, if the outcome is inconclusive but there remain concerns regarding possible misconduct in respect of the employee's attitude, behaviour or practices, the Playgroup disciplinary procedure can be invoked to address these concerns.

*Note - if the Leader is absent the Deputy Leader will follow the above procedures.



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Contact details are:

- Designated Child Protection Officer: Gillian Robinson 07548866739
- Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer: Jade Parker 07512209609
- Management Committee Designated Child Protection Officer: Caroline Buchanan 07843370473
- Early Years Social Worker: Helen Comiskey, 02837564020
- Gateway (Southern Trust): 0800 783 7745 or 02837415285
- Regional Social Work Services if outside normal working hours: 02895049999

This policy links with the following policies;

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Confidentiality and Client Access to Records policy
- Data Management policy
- Employment Policies (Staff folder)

This policy was adapted at a meeting of our playgroup held on the 30th May 2023.

Monitoring

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

This policy was reviewed by the Ballygawley Early Years Management Committee on:

Date: 10/06/2023

Signed:
(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Name and Position: Caroline Buchanan, Chairperson

Reviewed on:

Date: Signed:..... Position:.....

Date: Signed:..... Position:.....

Date: Signed:..... Position:.....