



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy

Principle

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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 Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup who comes into contact with children and their families has a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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.

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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, cultural, traditions and home background.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup works with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will inform the Southern Health and Care Trust of any allegations of abuse by a member of staff/volunteer or any abuse that is alleged to have taken place on the premises.

Procedure



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In accordance with Trust Guidelines, The Safeguarding Board NI Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures, Our Duty to Care and Social Services, at Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup we will endeavour to safeguard children by:

Key commitment 1

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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

- Designated Child Protection Officer: Jade Parker or Gillian Robinson, 02885567411 or 07917485942
- Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer: Rachel Pike - 02885567411 or 07917485942
- Management Committee Designated Child Protection Officer: Rachel McGinley - 07917485942

At Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup we endeavour to ensure that:

- All staff and parents/carers are made aware of our safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup provides adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup has 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 unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.



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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.

Types of Abuse:

Child abuse may take a number of forms, including:

- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.
- **Physical Abuse** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.
- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse 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 clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
- **Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called **psychological abuse** and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying - including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones by a child's peers.
- **Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the



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recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

- **Domestic violence and abuse** can have a profoundly negative effect on a child's emotional, psychological and social well-being. A child does not have to directly witness domestic violence to be adversely affected by it. Living in a violent or abusive domestic environment is harmful to children. Children can witness domestic violence and abuse directly and indirectly between their carers and/or the effects of it; this frequently constitutes emotional abuse and can have profoundly damaging effects on a child's or young person's well-being.
- **Female Genital Mutilation** involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. Female Genital Mutilation is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland.

*All the above definitions are from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2016)

(www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-youngpeople-northern-ireland)

These types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities, but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- All those working with children are aware that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, exploitation, emotional and sexual, as well as neglect.
- When children are suffering from exploitation, 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 behaviour, 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will refer concerns to the Gateway team without delay and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. The Gateway Team is the appropriate Social Services Department to refer concerns to.
- Those involved will take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to children or by asking questions of children.



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- The management team will use detailed procedures and reporting format when making a referral to Gateway. The referral will be made without delay.
- We will contact the 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:

- Designated Child Protection Officer: Jade Parker or Gillian Robinson, 02885567411 or 07917485942
- Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer: Rachel Pike - 02885567411 or 07917485942
- Management Committee Designated Child Protection Officer: Rachel McGinley - 07917485942
- Early Years Social Worker: Helen Comiskey, 02837564020
- Gateway team (Southern Trust): 0800 783 7745 or 02837567100
- Regional Social Work Services (if outside normal working hours): 08001979995
- NI Public Services Ombudsman: 0800 343 424
- PSNI Central Referral Unit: 02890259299

Recording suspicions of abuse

Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour, 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.



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Making a referral to Gateway

- Concerns will be reported without delay.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will follow any procedures that the Gateway team has in place.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will also inform our link Social Worker (Helen Comiskey) that we have made a referral to the Gateway team.
- Where the child already has a Social Worker, Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will contact them directly.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will retain a copy of any forms filled in for Gateway in the child's personal file.
- All staff are aware of the referral procedures for recording and reporting.

Contact details for Gateway team: 0800 783 7745 or 02837567100. If outside normal working hours then contact can be made with Regional Social Work Service on 08001979995.

Early Years Social Worker: Helen Comiskey, 02837564020

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. Guidance will be taken from the Gateway Team as to how to proceed.

Liaison with other agencies

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will work with the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.
- All staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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, Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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. Please



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note, Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup do not require parental permission to contact the Gateway Team when there is a child protection concern.

Allegations against staff

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup ensures that all parents know the complaints policy if they have concerns regarding the behaviour or actions of staff/students/trainees/volunteers within the setting.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup will follow the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust when responding to any complaint that a parent/carers has put forward.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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. Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- The management of Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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 Disclosure and Barring Service 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

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues through child protection training for staff. Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is also committed to empowering young children, through our curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

Training



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- Management will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise 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 know 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

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup introduces key elements of keeping children safe into our programme 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.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup believes in building trusting and supportive relationships with families/ staff/students/trainees/volunteers in the group.
- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup makes clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as the reporting of concerns,



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providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the Health and Social Care Trust.

- Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup 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 (UNOCINI)

Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup is aware of the referral system of UNOCINI - 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:

- Designated Child Protection Officer: Jade Parker or Gillian Robinson 02885567411 or 07917485942
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This policy was adapted at a meeting of our playgroup held on the 10th March 2026

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: 10/03/2026

Signed:

(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Name and Position: Iona Devine, Chairperson

Reviewed on:

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

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

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

This policy links to the following;



Ballygawley Early Years Playgroup

- Absence of the Leader policy
- Allegations Against Staff policy
- Child Arrival and Collection policy
- Confidentiality and Client Access to Records policy
- Data Management policy
- Mobile Phone policy
- Security policy
- Unwanted Adult Visitor policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- ICT (including E-Safety and Social Networking) policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour policy
- Anti-Bullying policy
- Employment Policies (staff folder)