



Allegation of Abuse Against a Member of Staff, Student or Volunteer Policy

At Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school, safeguarding children's welfare and well-being is our highest priority. We respond seriously and swiftly to any allegations of abuse, in compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, September 2025). This policy outlines our procedures for managing allegations, ensuring rigorous reporting, investigation, and provision of appropriate support.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) are Roxanne Speede and Linda McLellan

Reporting Procedures:

- All allegations or suspicions of abuse, whether raised by a child, observed by staff, or reported by others, must immediately be communicated to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- The DSL is responsible for coordinating with safeguarding agencies and managing communication with them.
- The DSL will advise our Trustee Team immediately.
- The Trustee team or DSL, where appropriate, are responsible for managing communication with the staff member.

Confidentiality:

- Allegations are handled with strict confidentiality, respecting privacy rights while ensuring information is shared appropriately for safeguarding purposes
- Only relevant parties will be informed.

Immediate Response:

- If a child is at immediate risk or harm, staff will take immediate protective action and notify emergency services as required.

Contacting Safeguarding Authorities:

- Upon notification to the DSL, they will make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 1 working day via the LADO referral form on the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) website.
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/information-for-childcare-providers/providers/child-protection-and-lado-procedure.aspx#>
Referral form will be emailed directly to lado.referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- An initial response from LADO will be provided within 24 hours.
- Complete cooperation with all external safeguarding investigations will be maintained.

Strategy Discussion:

- If there is reason to suspect significant harm to a child, a multi-agency strategy discussion will be convened, as per Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Internal Investigation:

- An impartial internal investigation, guided by LADO advice will be completed.
- External safeguarding agencies or professionals will be involved where necessary to ensure transparency and fairness.
- If police or social services are not involved, the LADO and Case Manager will agree on internal next steps, which may include:
 - No further action
 - Formal disciplinary action
 - Termination of employment or service
 - Further Investigation: If more information is needed, the LADO will determine who will lead the investigation and how it should be conducted.

Duties as an Employer and Employee

As an employer, we have a duty of care to our staff. We are committed to:

- Providing support to any employee facing an allegation.
- Assigning a named contact if the staff member is suspended.
- Ensuring that any allegation is handled quickly, fairly, and in accordance with safeguarding guidelines, ensuring the safety of the child and support for the staff member.

Informing the Accused:

- The individual should be informed of the allegation as soon as possible, following LADO and/or police guidance.
- Information will be shared only when appropriate and safe to do so.
- The DSO or a member of the trustee team will communicate with the staff member.

Suspension Procedures:

- Where necessary, staff accused of abuse may be suspended from duty during investigations to safeguard all children.
- Regular reviews of suspension status will be undertaken, considering updated information from investigations.

Communication with Parents:

- Parents and carers of the affected child(ren) will be sensitively informed of allegations, investigative steps, and outcomes, maintaining openness and transparency.

Support for All Parties:

- Emotional and practical support will be provided to affected children, families, and involved staff, prioritising emotional well-being.
- Independent support or counselling may be arranged for involved parties.

Record Keeping:

- Detailed records of all allegations, investigations, actions, and outcomes will be kept securely.
- Records will remain confidential, accessed only by authorised personnel and safeguarding authorities.

Training and Awareness:

- Staff will receive training updates on safeguarding and allegation management procedures.
- DSL's will receive annual Designated Lead Safeguarding Training appropriate to their role.
- Ensuring staff awareness of indicators of abuse and clear processes for raising concerns.

Review and Monitoring:

- Policy reviewed annually or sooner if required by legislation, changes in best practice or EYFS standards change.
- Regular feedback from staff, families, and safeguarding agencies will inform policy improvements and updates.

This policy was adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2025