



## Child Protection Policy

**Objective:** At BELC we keep the needs and best interests of children at the setting in everything we do.

**Policy:** At BELC we work with children, parents, external agencies, and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.

The ECC is aware that abuse does occur in our society, and we are vigilant in identifying signs of abuse and reporting concerns. Our practitioners have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of children. Due to the many hours of care, we provide, staff may often be the first people to identify that there may be a problem. They may well be the first people in whom children confide information that may suggest abuse or to spot changes in a child's behaviour which may indicate abuse.

Child protection and safeguarding is a critical aspect of early childhood education, and it is essential to have clear lines of accountability to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm. The following are some critical lines of responsibility for child protection within our setting:

**Governing body:** The governing body of Belinay ELC will be ultimately responsible for ensuring that the center has effective child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in place. This body will ensure that the center meets all the legal and regulatory requirements related to child protection and that all staff members are trained in child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures.

**Nursery Manager:** The nursery manager will be responsible for implementing child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures within the center. She will ensure that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities related to child protection and that any incident of suspected or actual child abuse or neglect is reported appropriately.

**The Designated safeguarding officer (DSO):** The center will designate a senior staff member as a Designated safeguarding officer. The DSO will coordinate and oversee child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures within the center. She will ensure that all staff members receive appropriate training, and that the policies and procedures are up-to-date and effective, and that any concerns about the safety and welfare of a child are reported and acted upon promptly in compliance with the center's child protection policies and procedures.

In the absence of the DSO, the concerns will be reported to the Nursery Manager. And in the absence of both the DSO and the Nursery Manager, the concerns will be reported to the Lead Teacher at the setting serving as a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead who would have undertaken prior Early Years Child Protection and Safeguarding Training.

**Staff members:** Belinay ELC believes in effectively implementing all policies and procedures that ensure the safety and protection of all children in our care. All staff members (practitioners and administrative staff) within Belinay ELC will be responsible for ensuring the safety and protection of children within their care. They must be aware of the ECC's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures in place, receive appropriate training during induction and through refresher training sessions and report any concerns they might have about the safety and welfare of a child to the DSO and the Nursery Manager. All members of staff will be instructed in the specific procedure to be adopted and followed at Belinay ELC, especially as regards disclosures and suspicions of cases of child abuse and neglect.

**Parents/guardians:** Parents and guardians also have a role to play in ensuring the safety and protection of their child. They will be made aware of the center's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures at the time of registration of their child at the center. Plus, BELC's child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures will be made available on the nursery's website and also available in the setting's policies and procedures file available on request in the manager's office. Parents will be encouraged to report any concerns they may have about their child's welfare to enable us to support them and work in partnership with them to promote their child's safety and wellbeing.

#### **Types of abuse and particular procedures followed:**

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, institution or community setting by those known to them or a stranger. This could be an adult or adults, another child, or children.

The signs and indicators listed below may not necessarily indicate that a child has been abused but will help us to recognize that something may be wrong, especially if a child shows a number of these symptoms or any of them to a marked degree.

#### **Indicators of child abuse**

- Failure to thrive and meet developmental milestones
- Fearful or withdrawn tendencies
- Aggressive behaviour
- Unexplained injuries to a child or conflicting reports from parents or staff
- Repeated injuries
- Unaddressed illnesses or injuries
- Significant changes to behaviour patterns
- Unexplained absences.

#### **Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures**

Staff should make an objective record in the incoming injury form of any observation or disclosure, supported by the nursery manager. This record should include:

- Child's name
- Child's address
- Age of the child and date of birth
- Date and time of the observation or the disclosure
- Exact words spoken by the child
- Exact position and type of any injuries or marks seen
- Exact observation of any incident including any other witnesses
- Name of the person to whom any concern was reported, with date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time
- Any discussion held with the parent(s) (where deemed appropriate).

These records should be signed by the person reporting this and the Nursery Manager/ DSO, dated and kept in a separate confidential file.

If a child starts to talk to an adult about potential abuse, it is important not to promise the child complete confidentiality. This promise cannot be kept. It is vital that the child is allowed to talk openly, and disclosure is not forced, or words put into the child's mouth.

As soon as possible after the disclosure details must be logged accurately. It may be thought necessary that through discussion with all concerned the matter needs to be raised with the local authority – MOI and MOE (Child Protection care team) and the KHDA. Staff involved may be asked to supply details of any information/concerns they have about a child. The nursery expects all members of staff to co-operate with the local authority, police, and the KHDA in any way necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Staff must not make any comments either publicly or in private about the supposed or actual behaviour of a parent or member of staff.

### **Physical abuse**

Action needs to be taken if staff have reason to believe that there has been a physical injury to a child, including deliberate poisoning, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented. These symptoms may include bruising or injuries in an area that is not usual for a child, e.g., fleshy parts of the arms and legs, back, wrists, ankles, and face. Many children will have cuts and grazes from normal childhood injuries. These should also be logged and discussed with the Nursery Manager/DSO. Children and babies may be abused physically through shaking or throwing. Other injuries may include burns or scalds. These are not usual childhood injuries and should always be logged and discussed with the Nursery Manager/DSO.

### **Fabricated illness**

This is also a type of physical abuse. This is where a child is presented with an illness that is fabricated by the adult carer. The carer may seek out unnecessary medical treatment or investigation. The signs may include a carer exaggerating a real illness or symptoms, complete fabrication of symptoms or inducing physical illness, e.g., through poisoning, starvation, inappropriate diet. This may also be presented through false allegations of abuse or encouraging the child to appear disabled or ill to obtain unnecessary treatment or specialist support.

#### **Procedure:**

- All signs of marks/injuries to a child, when they come into nursery or occur during time at the nursery, will be recorded as soon as noticed by a staff member.
- The incident will be discussed with the parents at the earliest opportunity, where felt appropriate.
- Such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to such records.
- If there are queries regarding the injury, the Police will be notified in line with procedures set out.

### **Sexual abuse**

Action needs to be taken if the staff member has witnessed an occasion(s) where a child indicated sexual activity through words, play, drawing, had an excessive preoccupation with sexual matters or had an inappropriate knowledge of adult sexual behaviour or language. This may include acting out sexual activity on dolls/toys or in the role play area with their peers, drawing pictures that are inappropriate for a child, talking about sexual activities or using sexual language or words. The child may become worried when their clothes are removed, e.g., for nappy changes.

The physical symptoms may include genital trauma, discharge and bruises between the legs or signs of a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Emotional symptoms could include a distinct change in a child's behaviour. They may be either withdrawn or overly extroverted and outgoing. They may withdraw away from a particular adult and become distressed if they reach out for them, but they may also be particularly clingy to a potential abuser so all symptoms and signs should be looked at together and assessed as a whole.

If a child starts to talk openly to an adult about abuse, they may be experiencing the procedure below will be followed.

#### **Procedure:**

- The adult should reassure the child and listen without interrupting if the child wishes to talk
- The observed instances will be detailed in a confidential report
- The observed instances will be reported to the Nursery Manager/DSO
- The matter will be referred to the local authority Child Protection care team.

### **Emotional abuse**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there is a severe, adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child, caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

This may include extremes of discipline where a child is shouted at or put down on a consistent basis, lack of emotional attachment by a parent, or it may include parents or carers placing an inappropriate age or developmental expectations upon them. Emotional abuse may also be imposed through the child witnessing domestic abuse and alcohol and drug misuse by adults caring for them.

The child is likely to show extremes of emotion with this type of abuse. This may include shying away from an adult who is abusing them, becoming withdrawn, aggressive, or clingy to receive their love and attention. This type of abuse is harder to identify as the child is not likely to show any physical signs.

### **Procedure:**

- The concern should be discussed with the Nursery Manager/DSO/Class teacher
- The concern will be discussed with the parent
- Such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to such records
- If there are queries regarding the circumstances the matter will be referred to the local authority.

### **Neglect**

Action should be taken if the staff member has reason to believe that there has been persistent or severe neglect of a child (for example, by exposure to any kind of danger, including cold/heat, starvation, or failure to seek medical treatment, when required, on behalf of the child), which results in serious impairment of the child's health or development, including failure to thrive.

Signs may include a child persistently arriving at nursery unwashed or unkempt, wearing clothes that are too small (especially shoes that may restrict the child's growth or hurt them), arriving at nursery in the same nappy they went home in, or a child having an illness or identified special educational need or disability that is not being addressed by the parent. A child may also be persistently hungry if a parent is withholding food or not providing enough for a child's needs.

Neglect may also be shown through emotional signs, e.g., a child may not be receiving the attention they need at home and may crave love and support at nursery. They may be clingy and emotional. In addition, neglect may occur through pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse.

### **Procedure:**

- The concern will be discussed with the parents.
- Such discussions will be recorded, and the parent will have access to such records.

If there are queries regarding the circumstances the local authority Child Protection care team will be notified.

### **Allegations against a member of the staff:**

When an allegation is made against a member of the staff, set procedures will be followed at the ECC. It is rare for a child to make an entirely false or malicious allegation, although misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events do happen. A child may also make an allegation against an innocent party because they are too afraid to name the real perpetrator. Even so, we understand and accept that some professionals do pose a serious risk to children and we must act on every allegation. Staff who are the subject of an allegation have the right to have their case dealt with fairly, quickly and consistently and to be kept informed of its progress.

Suspension is not the default option and alternatives to suspension will always be considered. However, in some cases, staff may be suspended where this is deemed to be the best way to ensure that allegations are investigated fairly, quickly and consistently and that all parties are protected. In the event of a suspension, the setting will provide support and a named contact for the member of staff. All allegations against staff should be reported directly to the Nursery Manager. In all cases, allegations against staff should be passed on to the Nursery owner within 24 hours.

Staff, parents and the nursery management team are reminded that publication of material that may lead to the identification of a staff who is the subject of an allegation is prohibited by law. Publication includes verbal conversations or writing, including content placed on social media sites. Allegations concerning staff who no longer work at the setting or historical allegations will be reported to the police. BELC will make every effort to maintain confidentiality while an allegation is being investigated or considered. In cases where allegations are substantiated, BELC will take swift and decisive disciplinary action, including termination of employment, and will comply fully with legal and regulatory authorities in pursuing further action as required.

### **Whistle blowing if staff have concerns about a colleague:**

Staff are expected to report all concerns about poor practice or possible child abuse by colleagues - including what may seem minor contraventions of the Nursery's Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) directly to the Nursery Manager to facilitate an early intervention in order to maintain appropriate boundaries and a safe culture that protects children and reduces the risk of abuse in the nursery. BELC's whistleblowing policy enables staff to raise concerns or allegations, initially in confidence, and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

Concerns or complaints about the Nursery Manager should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will report the matter to the Nursery owner.

**Some of our safe recruitment practices to ensure that all staff including volunteers and partners to work with children are 'safe' and 'vetted' are as follows:**

- Complete an application form which includes their employment history and explains any gaps in that history.
- Provide three references – 2 Verbal and 1 written, including at least one who can comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children.
- Provide evidence of identity and qualifications.
- If offered employment will be required to get a police clearance certificate.
- If offered employment, provide evidence of their right to work in the UAE.

The ECC will also:

- Ensure that every job description and person specification for roles in nursery includes a description of the role holder's responsibility for safeguarding.
- Ask at least one question at interview for every role in nursery about the candidate's attitude to safeguarding and motivation for working with children.
- Verify the preferred candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities.
- Obtain references for all shortlisted candidates, including internal candidates.

In addition to the above measures, the setting's Nursery Manager will have attended safer recruitment training. Trainee teachers will be checked either by the nursery or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained. BELC regularly reviews and updates its vetting procedures to ensure they remain robust and effective in safeguarding children from potential harm or exploitation. The setting maintains clear policies and protocols for supervising and monitoring adults working with children, including adherence to appropriate ratios and guidelines for adult-child interactions.

**Contact for concerned authority related to Child Protection:**

The hotline number in the United Arab Emirates for Ministry of Interior is 116111 – This number shall be dialled whenever anyone wants to report any suspected/ actual case of child abuse.

MOE's Child Protection Unit hotline number– 80085

MOE's Child Protection Unit dedicated number on 04-217666

Email: CPU@moe.gov.ae

Child protection website on the Hemayati app.

There are also other channels depending on each scenario, and they are:

- Community development authority – CDA on hotline 800988
- EWAA Shelter for Women and Children on hotline 8007283
- Contact the Ministry of Education on the hotline: 80051115 for any negative issues affecting the children's learning process.

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