

## Child Protection Policy

### Statement of intent

Woodlands recognises our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Working closely with the families of the children and ensure their safety and welfare is of paramount importance.

We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment, with a culture of openness where both children and adults feel secure, able to talk openly and believe that they are being listened to.

The purpose of this policy is to provide staff and volunteers with the framework they need in order to keep children safe and secure in our setting and how they can act in the protection of children against the risk of harm, abuse and neglect. To inform parents and carers how we will safeguard their children whilst they are in our care.

Woodlands will maintain an attitude of "it could happen here" where safeguarding is concerned. Children have the right to be treated with respect, to thrive and to be safe from all forms of abuse.

This Policy should be used in conjunction with Woodlands' Nursery Policies & Procedures. Specific guidance is available to staff within the procedure documents.

### Definitions

**Child protection** is an aspect of safeguarding but is focused on how we respond to children who have been significantly harmed or are at risk of significant harm.

**Staff** applies to all those working for or on behalf of Woodlands, full time or part time, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

**Child** refers to all young people who have not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. On the whole, this will apply to children of Woodlands; however the policy will extend to visiting children and students from other establishments

**Parent** refers to birth parents and other adults in a parenting role for example adoptive parents, step-parents, guardians and foster carers.

**Abuse** could mean neglect, physical, emotional, sexual abuse, domestic abuse or any combination of these. Parents, carers and other people can harm children either by direct acts and / or failure to provide proper care.

**Contextual Safeguarding** is defined as being as young children grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. For example: in nursery, in the local community, in their peer groups or online. Children may encounter risk in any of these environments

### Aims of the Setting

- To provide staff with the skills and guidance to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children, meeting their statutory responsibilities
- To create a culture of safety, value and respect
- To ensure consistent good practice across the setting
- To demonstrate our commitment in protecting all children
- To create a culture of vigilance where children's welfare is encouraged and supported through the curriculum

## **Our Principles & Values:**

In line with encompassing 'Woodlands Values' throughout the setting

- All Children have the right to feel safe and secure and cannot learn and develop effectively unless they do so
- All children have the right to be protected from harm and all types of abuse
- All staff have a key role in prevention of harm and an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may indicate a child is at risk of harm, either within the setting, home environment, or in the community. Woodlands will take into account any contextual safeguarding, having an awareness of Prevent Duty.
- Woodlands acknowledges that it is essential to work in partnership with other agencies that protect children and reduce risk, we will engage in partnership working throughout any child protection processes to safeguard children.
- Woodlands will work openly with parents as far as possible; we reserve the right to contact Children's Social Care or the police, without notifying parents if this is believed to be in the child's best interests.

## **Safeguarding Leadership and Management**

Woodlands have established clear lines of accountability, training and advice to support the processes of Child Protection and individual staff within that process.

Within Woodlands, any individual can contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) if they have concerns about a child or their family. The DSL for Woodlands Early Learning LTD is Stacey Harper, DDSLs are Jemma Barnett and Jess Murphy, who will fulfil the DSL role in their absence. The senior management team are also available for further advice and support where the D(D)SL's are not available.

As an employer, Woodlands Early Learning LTD follows safer recruitment guidance as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2023 *as from September 2023. \*see safer recruitment policy*

## **Training**

All staff within Woodlands are expected to be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and be able to respond appropriately. Training and updates are provided as required through regular staff training meetings room meetings. Staff are also provided with Child Protection scenarios and activities throughout the year to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Training is provided to all new staff on appointment through online, CPD approved training courses which enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. All new staff receive induction training, this will include safeguarding and child protection issues, what to do if they are worried about a child, the action that would be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child, the process for early help and their roles and responsibilities. The induction will provide new staff with the skills to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating.

The D(D)SLs will attend training at least every other year to enable them to fulfil their role, as well as attending local authority Lead Practitioner meetings on a regular basis to keep up to date with any updates or trends within the local area.

Any update in national or local guidance will be shared with all staff; in meetings and using the online sharing platforms. This policy will be updated during the year to reflect any changes brought about by new guidance.

## **Referral**

Following any concerns raised, the D(D)SL will assess the information and consider if significant harm has happened or there is a risk that it may happen. If the evidence suggests the threshold of significant harm, or risk of significant harm has been reached, or if it is not clear if the threshold is met, the D(D)SL will contact Children's Social Care and, if appropriate, the police. If the DSL or DDSL is not available or there are immediate concerns, the staff member will refer directly to Children's Social Care and the police if appropriate.

The exception to this process will be in those cases of known FGM where there is a mandatory requirement to report directly to the police. The DSL should also be made aware.

Generally, the D(D)SL will inform the parents prior to making a referral. However, there are situations where this may not be possible or appropriate, particularly when informing parents, may place the child at further risk.

When making referrals, the D(D)SL will follow the guidance from Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership:

*'When a professional working in Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth or Southampton assesses that a child/family requires additional support, they need to complete an inter-agency referral or contact form as per local processes and share this with the relevant Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. The use of the Threshold Guidance will assist this process and help inform the practitioner's decision-making.'*

## **Confidentiality**

- Woodlands maintains that all matters relating to child protection are to be treated as confidential and only shared as per the 'Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners' (DfE 2018) guidance
- There is a lawful basis for child protection concerns to be shared with agencies who have a statutory duty for child protection
- Information will be shared with individuals within the setting who 'need to know'
- All staff are aware that they should never promise a child to keep a disclosure confidential, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child

## **Information Sharing**

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect in our care. No staff member should assume that someone else will pass on information which may be critical to keeping a child safe.

GDPR is not a barrier to sharing information, welfare of children is of paramount concern. Woodlands have a duty to pass forward any documentation for a child following any child protection concerns, this includes new settings and schools. The D(D)SL will liaise with the D(D)SL of the setting or school, confirm the child's enrolment and arrange to hand over any documentation for child protection reasons in person, with a signed handover letter kept on file at Woodlands once this is complete. If the setting is out of area, Woodlands will arrange with the D(D)SL of the new setting or school to send documentation through recorded delivery to ensure a safe and complete handover.

## **Handling concerns and allegations against staff**

If a concern is raised about the practice or behaviour of a member of staff, this information will be recorded and passed to the named D(D)SL. The D(D)SL will make an assessment to determine if the matter is a 'low level concern' or an 'allegation'. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted for all

allegations and the relevant guidance will be followed. If the D(D)SL needs advice or guidance they will contact the LADO. If the allegation is against the D(D)SL, the person receiving the allegation will contact the LADO directly calling **01962 876364**.

LADO can be contacted for initial enquiries and information through the online form:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=tdiBPwfuF0yGnB20OQGNm3hCO\\_yf\\_9JNiAsh9OheoihUQTlJRFM0SE0zUFE2Q1BPT0Y1SE5TTDMwVv4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=tdiBPwfuF0yGnB20OQGNm3hCO_yf_9JNiAsh9OheoihUQTlJRFM0SE0zUFE2Q1BPT0Y1SE5TTDMwVv4u)

### **Child-on-Child Abuse**

If a concern is raised that a child is abusing another child, the 'Child on Child Abuse' guidance will be followed.

Working in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 *as from September 2023*. (KCSiE), the document states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, Woodlands will ensure the child's wishes and feelings are considered when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

## **Woodlands Child Protection Procedures**

### **Overview**

The following procedures apply to all staff working in the setting and will be covered by induction training, as well as ongoing training, to enable staff to understand their role and responsibility. The aim of our procedures is to provide a robust framework which enables staff to take appropriate action when they are concerned that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm.

The prime concern at all stages must be for the interests and safety of the child. Where there is a conflict of interest between the child and an adult, the interests of the child must be paramount.

All staff are aware that very young children, those with disabilities, special needs, certain medical conditions or with language deficit/English as a second language, may have more difficulty in communicating concerns or feelings. They may be more likely to communicate concerns with behaviours rather than words. Additionally, staff will question the cause of knocks and bumps in children who have limited or no mobility, which will include children visiting the site.

### **If a member of staff suspects abuse, spots signs or indicators of abuse, or they have a disclosure of abuse made to them they must:**

1. Make an initial record of the information - using the child protection recording form if available
2. Report it to the D(D)SL immediately
3. The D(D)SL will consider if there is a requirement for immediate medical intervention. Urgent medical attention should not be delayed if the D(D)SL is not immediately available
4. Make an accurate record (which may be used in any subsequent court proceedings) as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the occurrence. Include everything that has happened, including details of:
  - Dates and times of observations
  - Dates and times of any discussions in which they were involved
  - Any injuries
  - Explanations given by the child/adult
  - What action was taken
  - Any actual words or phrases used by the child

The records must be signed and dated by the author on both paper and computer formats.

- In the absence of the D(D)SL, be prepared to refer directly to Children’s Social Care using inter-agency referral form (and the police if appropriate) if there is the potential for immediate, significant harm.

**Following a report of concerns the D(D)SL must:**

- Decide whether or not there are sufficient grounds for suspecting significant harm, if so, a referral must be made to Children’s Social Care and Police. The reasoning for this decision should be recorded by the D(D)SL
- Normally, the setting will try to discuss any concerns about a child’s welfare with the family and where possible, seek their agreement before making a referral to Children’s Social Care. However, in accordance with DfE guidance, this will only happen when it will not put the child at increased risk or could have an impact on a police investigation. Where there are doubts about involving the child’s family, the D(D)SL will clarify with Children’s Social Care or the police whether the parents should be told about the referral and, if so, when and by whom. Woodlands will also seek to include the children’s views to be taken into account when appropriate.
- If there are grounds to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm the DSL (or DDSL) must contact Children’s Social Care via the Inter-Agency Referral Form (IARF), making a clear statement of:
  - the known facts
  - any suspicions or allegations
  - whether or not there has been any contact with the child’s family.

*If there is indication that the child is suffering significant harm, a call will also be made to Children’s Reception Team (CRT) on 01329 225379.*

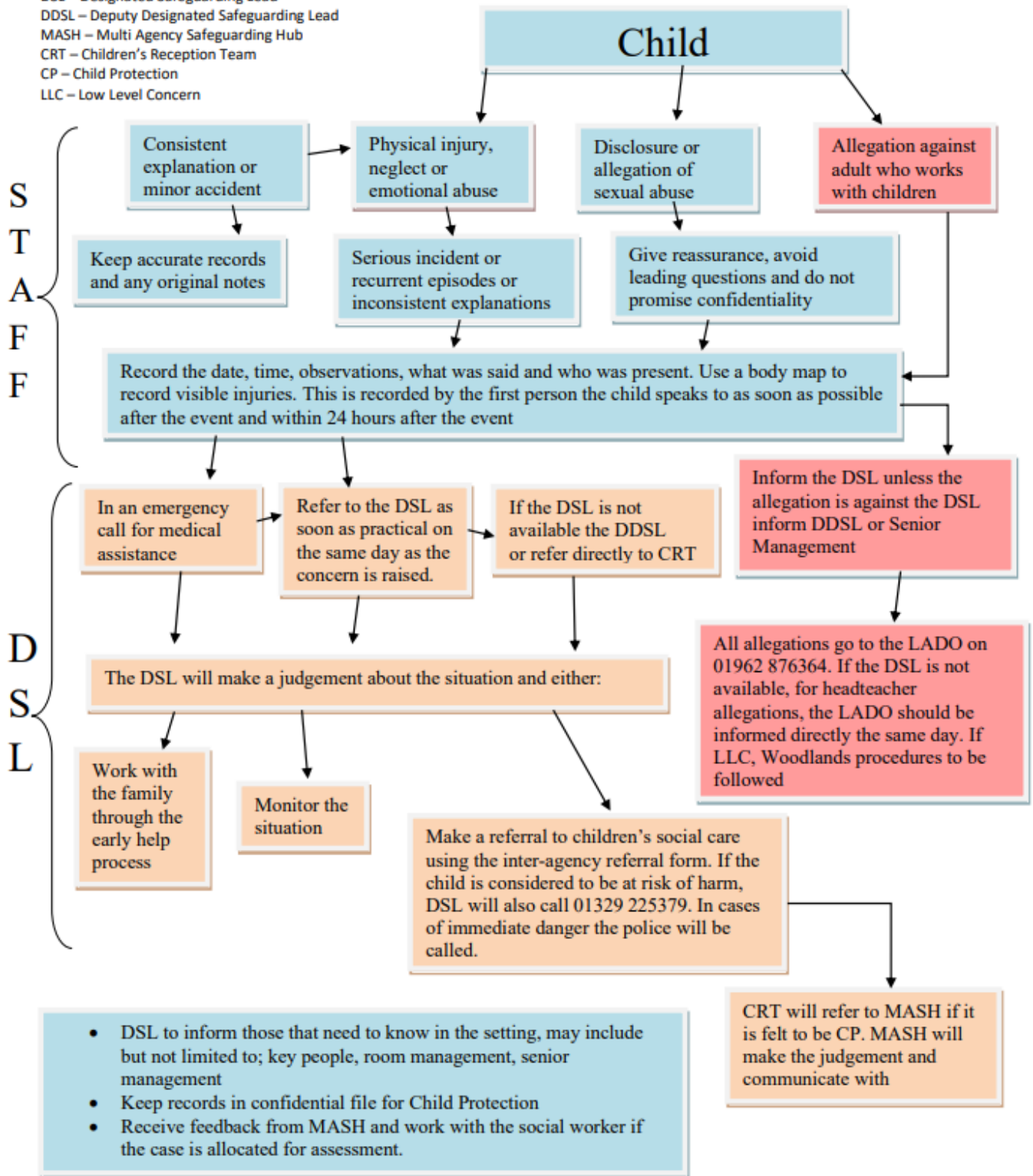
- If a child is in immediate danger and urgent protective action is required, the police must be called. The D(D)SL will then notify Children’s Social Care of the occurrence and what action has been taken.
- When a pupil needs *urgent* medical attention and there is suspicion of parental abuse causing the medical need, the DSL or their Deputy should take the child to the accident and emergency unit at the nearest hospital and inform Children’s Social Care. Advice will be sought from Children’s Social Care about informing the parents, as parents should normally be informed that a child requires urgent hospital attention.
- If there is not a risk of significant harm, the DSL will either actively monitor the situation or consider the Early Help process using the HSCP Threshold Chart.
- In cases of allegations against staff or low-level concerns, the HSCP procedure will be followed using the Threshold Chart.

**Useful Contacts**

DSL – Stacey Harper DDSL – Jemma Barnett Jess Murphy	01489 605495	Fareham and Gosport Family support	0370 7790300
(CRT) Children’s Reception Team	01329 225379	Out-of-hours social care	0300 555 1373
NSPCC	0808 8005000 <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a>	Hampshire Children’s Services	03005551384
(LADOs) Local Authority Designated Officers	01962 876364	HCC Safeguarding Unit	01962 876364 <a href="mailto:Child.protection@hants.gov.uk">Child.protection@hants.gov.uk</a>

***If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call the police on 999***

DSL – Designated Safeguarding Lead  
 DDSL – Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead  
 MASH – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub  
 CRT – Children’s Reception Team  
 CP – Child Protection  
 LLC – Low Level Concern



\*In alleged cases of FGM, the member of staff who was made aware will also call the police.

## **Handling Disclosures**

If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff, they should maintain a positive attitude and try to reassure them. They should not promise complete confidentiality and should explain that they may need to share the information to help keep them safe. The degree of confidentiality should always be led by the need to protect the child. All Woodlands staff treat child protection issues very sensitively and ensure that they do not influence the children in any way, through speaking to the children, how they respond and react.

Children with communication difficulties and for those whose preferred language is not English need to be given additional consideration. It is important to communicate with them in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preferred communication method.

All staff should know who the D(D)SL are and who to approach if the D(D)SL are unavailable. Ultimately, all staff have the right to make a referral to the police or social care directly and should do this if, for whatever reasons, there are difficulties following the agreed protocol.

### **What happens next?**

It is important that any concerns are followed up, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that they are. The member of staff should be informed by the D(D)SL what has happened after the report being made. If they do not receive this information, they should be proactive in seeking it out.

If a staff member believes that their concerns have not been dealt with effectively or that the child remains at risk, they should initially ask the D(D)SL to reconsider ensuring that the risks are understood. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome, or the D(D)SL rationale appears to miss the risk to the child, then the Whistleblowing procedures should be followed. If the DSL is unhappy with the response from Children Social Care, they should consider following the HSCP escalation protocol.

Woodlands understands that receiving a disclosure can be upsetting for the member of staff and support staff after the disclosure. We have an employee-based counselling service provided through Health Assured which may be used if and when appropriate.

## **Bruising Protocol**

Bruising is the most common physical sign of child abuse. A bruise can be a sign of abuse in a child of any age but bruising in non-mobile babies is unusual and can be associated with life threatening injury. The Hampshire bruising protocol states that all non-mobile babies with a bruise should be fully assessed and referred immediately to Children's Services, even if parents feel they are able to give a reason for the bruise.

Children's Services will make background checks and arrange a paediatric assessment as soon as possible (within a maximum of four hours). The outcome will then be shared either to the parents or from Children's services back to the setting.

## Allegations against adults who work with children

Woodlands will make reference to 'Working together to Safeguard children' when defining what is deemed as an allegation, complaint or concern about quality of care or practice.

Allegations, as defined by KCSiE will be reported to the LADO. Complaints or concerns can be managed independently following our complaints procedure.

**Complaints** could include: -

- Breaches of the code of Conduct
- Any breach of data protection or confidentiality
- Poor behaviour management
- Inappropriate use of social media
- Misadministration of medication

**Concerns** could include:-

- Inappropriate use of language, shouting or swearing
- Discussing personal or sexual relationships with, or in the presence, of pupils
- Making (or encouraging others to make) unprofessional comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate children, or might be interpreted as such.

Lower Level Concerns (LLC's) , which do not reach the allegations harm threshold (or complaints criteria) will be dealt with following the Nursery procedures.

### **Procedure for Allegations that meet the harm threshold**

This procedure will be used in any cases when it is alleged a member of staff, volunteer, or another adult who works with children has either:

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; or**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or**
- **behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would pose a risk of harm to children; or**
- **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.**

When considering allegations of suitability, (the fourth point above) the LADOs would consider the following situations:

- Parents of children who are placed on a CIN plan or are receiving Early Help;
- Arrests for offences against adults;
- Presentation to other professionals around mental health, domestic abuse and/or substance misuse;
- Extreme political or religious viewpoints which could be considered Hate Crime;
- Concerns about behaviour in their private lives which may impact on children

In any of these situations, the LADO criteria for intervention will be assessed against the likelihood and impact of transferable risk to children.



In line with the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership process:

- Staff will report any concerns about the conduct of adult working with the children as soon as possible.
- If an allegation is made against the DSL or DDSL, the concerns need to be raised with the Senior Management as soon as possible, if not available, then the LADO will be contacted directly
- There may be situations when the Woodlands will want to involve the police immediately, if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence.
- Once an allegation has been received by the D(D)SL, they will contact the LADO on **01962 876364** or [child.protection@hants.gov.uk](mailto:child.protection@hants.gov.uk) as soon as possible and before carrying out any investigation into the allegation.
- Inform the parents of the allegation unless there is a good reason not to

In liaison with the LADO, Woodlands will determine how to proceed and if necessary, the LADO will refer the matter to Children's Social Care and/or the police.

If the matter is investigated internally, the LADO will advise the setting to seek guidance from their HR provider in following procedures set out in Part 4 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023) and the HSCP procedures.

### **Lower Level Concerns (LLCs)**

The LLC policy is part of the whole setting approach to safeguarding. The purpose of the policy is to encourage an open and transparent culture, which enables the setting to identify concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour at an early stage. It should also empower staff to share LLCs with the DSL. LLCs will be managed independently by Woodlands under internal procedures.

Examples of LLCs include, but is not limited to:-

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

The LLC policy will:-

- Ensure that staff are clear about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, in themselves and others;
- Empower staff to share any low-level safeguarding concerns with the DSL
- Address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage.
- Provide a responsive, sensitive and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised
- Help identify any weakness in the settings safeguarding system
- Empower staff to feel comfortable support or challenge fellow colleagues if they feel that their practice is not to the Woodlands standard or in the best interest of the children

In line with the LLC policy:-

- All LLCs will be shared responsibly with the D(D)SL and Senior Management, recorded in writing and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner, following Woodlands disciplinary procedures.
- All LLCs will be reviewed, so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.
- If LLCs are found to be escalating and are reaching the harm threshold, referral will be made to the LADO.

**If there is any doubt about the level at which behaviour needs to be addressed, LADO advice will be taken.**