



Ready, Steady, Grow!!

Creche, Montessori, After School

## **Child Protection Policy**

**Policy amended  
13<sup>th</sup> July 2011**



## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

Ready, Steady, Grow!! endeavours to create a safe, fun and stimulating environment for children while working in partnership with parents in maximising the learning opportunities for their child

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## **1.INTRODUCTION**

Ready, Steady, Grow!! recognises the importance of providing a safe and caring environment for children in our care – it is for this reason we have a buzzer entry system in operation so all persons entering and exiting the building are monitored.. The Child Protection Policy details the guidelines for safe care practice in Ready, Steady, Grow!! as outlined in Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999) and in Our Duty to Care (2002). All staff are required to be familiar with this document and understand its implications for care practice. During Induction all staff are required to review this policy and agree to implement it. A copy of this policy will be made available to all parents/guardians on a child's admission to the service.

## **2.WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD SAFETY IN READY, STEADY, GROW!!?**

The owner/manager of Ready, Steady, Grow!! has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. The manager will support the staff in ensuring that best practice standards are achieved. The manager will institute regular reviews of the policy with staff to ensure the policy is being implemented correctly. During the induction process all staff are expected to read and discuss the Child Protection Policy with the manager before agreeing and signing their understanding and willingness to follow these protocols. On an ongoing basis through staff meetings and supervision, the manager will encourage staff to speak openly about any child protection issues they may have. The manager will ensure that staff understand their responsibility in raising child protection issues.

Where manager is unavailable the Deputy Manager will take on the responsibility for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in unforeseen circumstances where neither of the above are available, the designated child care leader with responsibility will be responsible for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

### **Child Care Staff**

Child Care staff have the responsibility to be familiar with and understand the Child Protection Policy and should demonstrate an ability to put the policy into practice. In applying the policy to practice, all staff must report any concerns of a child protection nature to the Manager immediately. All child care staff must work in line with the Child Protection Policy at all times. All staff must apply the principles of reflective practise in

carrying out their duties under the Child Protection Policy. Therefore they must demonstrate a willingness to raise and discuss these issues in Supervision.

### **ANCILLARY STAFF**

While not working directly with the children, all ancillary staff must be made aware of this Child Protection Policy and their duties in this regard. It will be the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that ancillary staff are informed about Child Protection Policy. A Gardai clearance must be obtained for all ancillary staff.

### **3. CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

1. Where child protection concerns arise, information shall be shared with the relevant parties in consultation with the parents and in the best interest of the child. The information will be shared with other professionals/ relevant people on a need to know basis as outlined in Children First. The concern may be an allegation, a disclosure of abuse or a staff member should report a concern or a suspicion of abuse or unsafe practice. The sharing of information in relation to an allegation is not a breach of confidentiality and on receipt of an allegation; this should be explained to the parties involved.
2. Where personal information is being shared, family members should be informed, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.
3. All records pertaining to an allegation should be kept in a safe and confidential manner. The records will be kept on the relevant files in a locked filing cabinet. All records held by the service are subject to the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information.

### **4. SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES FOR STAFF**

1. All available positions are advertised in local newspapers.
2. All staff have the recognised qualifications (Fetac, Montessori )
3. There is a clear job description and accompanying application form.
4. All employees of Ready, Steady, Grow!! are required to have Garda vetting – this includes all child care staff, management, administration and ancillary staff. In the application process –all candidates will complete the garda vetting form. All successful candidates must acquire Garda Vetting and have three written positive references on file which cannot include a family

member and will be followed up by a phone call. A candidate must provide a PPS number and a valid photo ID with a signature.

5. Garda vetting must be obtained on each employee by the director of services before they can have direct contact with children..
6. All applicants are required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. Any applicants with prior convictions against children or without the necessary qualifications will not be considered for a post.
7. An interview panel consisting of the manager and two independent child care professionals.
8. There is a six month probationary period with appraisal before being appointed to a permanent position.
9. Each staff have to sign a contract which is agreed by management and worker.

(See Recruitment Policy.)

## **5. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

The Manager is the designated person for reporting Child protection issues. There are two processes for reporting child protection concerns –process for dealing with a disclosure of abuse and the process for dealing with a concern/ suspicion of abuse. In the instance of where there is reasonable grounds for concern or suspicion of abuse – one should refer to Children First- for the standard reporting procedure. “Any reasonable suspicion of abuse must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing further harm to the child or young person” (Dept of Health, 1999:37). It is of vital importance where a staff member has any concern in relation to a child that they would bring it to the immediate of the attention of the manager.

### **Dealing with a concern or suspicion of abuse:**

1. Where a member of staff that has observed an action or observed signals that indicate a child might be at risk or that another member of staff is involved in inappropriate practice – they are required to bring in to the immediate attention of the manager.
2. The manager will examine the information and may request the person to make a written account in relation to the disclosure or inappropriate practice.

3. Where the concern has been substantiated, the manager will put in place the procedure for dealing with disclosure. The manager will also inform the family both verbally and in writing of the concern and the outcome of initial investigation. If the concern involves abuse of any kind – the process for reporting disclosures will be put in place immediately.



### **Dealing with a disclosure of abuse from a child:**

1. Where a member of staff receives a disclosure from a child or member of their family, they will immediately inform their designated person (the manager).
2. The Manager then will inform the family (if appropriate) and forward the standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare concerns to the on duty social worker and the Gardai where appropriate.
3. The reporting procedure for child protection concerns as outlined in Children First be put in place. The manager will complete the standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare concerns. This form will be forwarded to the duty social work team.
4. Where appropriate, a child protection concern may also involve invoking the complaints procedure.

### **6. PROCEDURE FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF**

This procedure outlines the protocol and policy for dealing with allegations, as outlined in Children First and Our Duty to Care:

1. When a parent makes an allegation of abuse against a staff member, the person receiving the complaint must listen to the parent, reassure them that their complaint will be addressed and offer them support in this process.
2. If the alleged complaint involves a person on duty, the staff receiving the complaint will inform the manager immediately.
3. On receiving the information the manager on call will assess the situation in relation to the staff remaining on duty or not. This decision will be based on the severity of allegation. If the decision is to remove the staff member from duty – the manager will inform the staff of the decision. The Manager will convene a meeting as soon as possible with the worker concerned, informing him/her of the complaint/allegation and giving an opportunity to respond and advising him/her of their right to representation.
4. The manager will liaise with the employee whom the allegation is made against as soon as is practical. The manager will ensure any allegation is given priority and ensure that the child is not placed at any unnecessary risk. The manager will gather as much information as is possible on the incident – using this information to decide what further steps to take.
5. Dependent on the nature of the allegation and the findings of the risk assessment it may be appropriate for the Manager to suggest that the staff

member involved may continue to be relieved of their duties until such a time as the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

6. During this period, the employee will not be entitled to access any of the services premises except at prior request of the manager and subject to any conditions that the manager may impose.
7. The decision to place the employee on special leave with pay will be confirmed in writing.
8. At all stages of the process, the Manager will keep the family informed.
9. If disciplinary action is required as a result of an investigation following an allegation – the disciplinary policy and procedure will be enacted.
10. Any decision to issue disciplinary action following a substantiated allegation will be taken in consultation with the health board and the Gardai (where appropriate). An immediate meeting will be arranged with all relevant parties for this purpose.
11. The findings of this process may result in a child protection reporting procedure as outlined in Children First enacted.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF STAFF**

### **Supervision**

All staff will receive monthly supervision and where necessary will receive at a higher level.

(See Supervision Policy)

### **Induction**

All staff will be given a two week induction involving reading and discussion of policies with the Manager, familiarising themselves with the Children First Guidelines and The Regulations for Pre- School Services and all the relevant Child Care legislation. The Induction will also include shadowing staff on shift, familiarising themselves with the policies and procedures in practice and understanding their application. On completion of induction, the staff member and Manager will both sign off on the list of policies indicating that the staff member has read and understand the policies.

(See Induction Policy)

## **8. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

The children in our care have a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Each child is unique and this should be reflected in the ethos, management and child care

practices of the service. Child Care staff need to work in a caring and respectful manner at all times so that the child feels valued, supported and safe.

1. Children have the right to be treated as an individual and to have their own opinion and to be supported in developing their skills in making their own decisions.
2. Child Care staff should be aware of actively listening to the child and valuing and respecting the young people as individuals.
3. Children should be involved in the decision –making, as appropriate.
4. Children have the right to be treated with respect and their safety is paramount at all times.
5. Children have the right to learn about their culture and be proud of their heritage and beliefs.
6. Children have the right to make mistakes and be encouraged to learn from these mistakes with support to develop these skills – they should receive encouragement and praise to develop their talents.

## **10. PROCEDURE FOR COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

Ready, Steady, Grow!! recognise the importance of creating an environment where all staff and parents feel safe to voice a complaint or concern.

A complaint is defined as a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet for, or on behalf of, an individual child or adult. The following process is designed to deal with a complaint or concern

All staff and parents must be informed of the procedure to make a complaint or voice a concern. It is accepted that everyone has the right to make a complaint to any appropriate person with whom they feel comfortable. Though a complaint may first be reported to a member of the child care team the responsibility of implementing the complaints process lies with the Manager.

The following structure will guide the practise in responding to a complaint and in initiating and implementing investigative procedures.

### **How to receive a complaint**

1. Each Complaint or concern, formal or informal, raised will be listened to and recorded and forwarded to the Manager. Where an informal complaint can be resolved, it should be, as soon as possible and still be recorded in the complaint log.

2. On receiving a complaint, assure parents that you will listen and record what they say and pass the information on to the appropriate person who will deal with the complaint.
3. The Complaint form and any relating documentation must to forwarded to the manager as soon as possible

## **Guidelines for the management of complaints and/or concerns**

1. A complaint having been made, the Manager will ensure they have received full details from the person making the complaint and begin the complaints process. Having lodged a complaint and entered stage one, parents should expect that the complaint will be dealt with within the week.
2. If the complaint related to a staff member, the Manager will convene a meeting as soon as possible with the worker concerned, informing them of the complaint and giving an opportunity to respond and advising them of their right to representation
3. Where other individuals have been present or involved around the named complaint, the Manager will meet with them as soon as possible
4. In consultation with the parents, the manager will convene a meeting to decide on the appropriate response to the situation. The Manager will ensure the outcome is clearly recorded on the appropriate files.

## **Procedure for dealing with complaints against staff**

1. A meeting will be convened with the worker involved to discuss the complaint.
2. If the complaint can be addressed within the service with the parents and the staff involved, a meeting will be held with all parties involved facilitated by the Manager. All attempts will be made to reach a satisfactory outcome at this level and will be recorded in the complaints log and the child's file.
3. If the complaint is of a serious nature the manager will follow protocol and procedures as outlined in the procedure for dealing with allegations against staff
4. In the event of a staff member not agreeing with the outcome of the above procedure, for example, if the complaint of the young person is upheld, they can appeal any decisions made through the Grievance Procedure.

## **12. ACCIDENTS/ INCIDENTS PROCEDURE**

In the event of any accident/incident occurring, Ready, Steady, Grow!! Health and Safety Policy will be enacted. At all times the service will display emergency numbers and have first aid boxes available in designated areas within the centre. The service will hold full insurance and all accident/ incidents will be recorded in the hazard book. All contact numbers for the child's family are on file as are contact numbers for staff and are easily accessible in the event of an accident or incident.

# **Appendix One**

## **Definitions of Abuse as Outlined in Children First Guidelines**

## **Definition of Neglect**

Neglect can be defined in terms of an *omission*, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

*Harm* can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

## **Definition of Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a care-giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse of children include: Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioral, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include: 'anxious' attachment, non-organic failure to thrive, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behavior. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become *typical* of the relationship between the child and the parent/career.



## **Definition of Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following:

This is a condition where parents, usually the mother (according to current research and case experience), fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness. This can occur where the parent secretly administers dangerous drugs or other poisonous substances to the child or by smothering. The symptoms which alert to the possibility of Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy include the following:

(i) symptoms which cannot be explained by any medical tests; symptoms never observed by anyone other than the carer; symptoms reported to occur only at home or when a parent visits a child in hospital;

(ii) High level of demand for investigations of symptoms without any documented physical signs;

(iii) Unexplained problems with medical treatment such as drips coming out and lines being interfered with;

(iv) Presence of unprescribed medication or poisons in the blood or urine.

Management of such cases will differ from other suspected cases of child abuse, particularly in regard to contact with parents and advising parents of concerns.

(i) the imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;

(ii) conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviors or actions;

(iii) emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;

(iv) unresponsiveness, inconsistent, or inappropriate expectations of the child;

(v) premature imposition of responsibility on the child;

(vi) unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way;

(vii) Under or over-protection of the child;

(viii) Failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;

(ix) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;

- (x) exposure to domestic violence.
- (l) shaking
- (ii) use of excessive force in handling (iii) deliberate poisoning
- (iv) suffocation
- (v) Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy<sup>\*</sup>
- (vi) allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **Definition of Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- (l) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- (ii) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of the sexual arousal or gratification;
- (iii) masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- (iv) sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal, or anal;
- (v) Sexual exploitation of a child includes inciting, encouraging propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modeling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the “grooming” process by perpetrators of abuse.
- (vi) Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an under-age person. In relation to **child sexual abuse**, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year-old girl and her 17 year-old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting **child sexual abuse**.