Bristol Childminding
The heart of quality home-based childcare

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for Childminders

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My responsibility

As a registered childminder, it is my responsibility to ensure the safety and promote the welfare of all children in my care. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, I will ensure my approach is child-centred and will always consider what is in the best interest of the child. I understand that I have a pivotal role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time. My professional responsibility with regard to Child Protection is laid out in the *Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the* Early Years Foundation Stage 2024.

As the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for my setting, if I have concerns about a child, I will follow the child protection procedures outlined within this policy and the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership local procedures.

This policy is in line with the statutory, government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023* and has regard to the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, where relevant to my childminding setting.

My training

I attended initial Child Protection training as part of my course to become a registered childminder. Within six months of registering with Ofsted, I will attend/have attended the single agency safeguarding training organised by Bristol City Council's Childminding Support Team. As the Designated Safeguarding Lead for my setting, I will continuously update my knowledge of child protection.

Most recently, I attend a training session on (course title):……on (date):……

I am familiar with the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership website which gives information on the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to respond. I am aware that information on signs and symptoms can also be found in the government booklet 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' March 2015, and on the NSPCC website.

Definitions of Abuse:

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others.

- **Physical Abuse** – a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

- **Emotional Abuse** - the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These

may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

- **Sexual Abuse-** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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 of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- **Neglect -** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
  - provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
  - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
  - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers);
  - or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

  It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

  ***Nappy Rash**

  Nappy rash can be a sign of neglect, especially if left untreated. While nappy rash can be common in babies, I must record any occurrences of nappy rash and have it signed by the child's parent or carers. I will work closely with parents/carers to ensure appropriate treatment and preventative care. A medication form will be completed for both prescription and non-prescription creams/ointments, and parents/carers will sign to give their permission. If I have any concerns, I will follow the child protection procedure within this policy, which may include seeking advice from Families in Focus or making a referral to First Response.

My child protection procedure – Responding to Abuse and Neglect

1. I am aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual, and those of neglect. I will discuss concerns with parents or carers at the earliest opportunity if I should:

- notice any significant changes in a child's behaviour or deterioration in a child's well-being
- notice any unexplained bruises or marks
- find that a child's comments gave me cause for concern

- have any reason to suspect abuse or neglect.

I will refer any injury or mark caused by so-called 'disciplining' or 'chastising' a child to First Response.

2. I use an Accident and Incident Book as a matter of course to log pre-existing injuries. I would record any concerns, including nappy rash*, worrying marks or comments by a child and make a note of the resulting discussion with the parent or carer (this would establish an 'individual safeguarding file' on a child)

3. If I still have concerns about a child's welfare, then I must contact First Response to make a referral using the online notification form. If the concern is urgent, I must telephone First Response on 0117 9036444. If there is an immediate risk to a child, I must contact the police on 999.

4. I would normally seek consent from the child's parent or carer to make a referral/request for help to First Response, but parental permission can be by-passed when there are safeguarding concerns. If consent was denied, I would make a note of the reason for by-passing consent.

5. I would always inform parents that I am going to make a referral to First Response, unless I had concerns about the child's safety or the safety of my minded children or my own family.

Asking for advice as a solo DSL

If I am unsure as to whether or not I need to make a child protection referral, I can ask for advice from the Families in Focus Social Worker for the area the child lives in. While I am seeking professional advice, I would not mention the child's name.

The Families in Focus Social Worker might advise a request for 'early help' or a child protection referral. Both a request for early help and a child protection referral are requested through First Response.

Using the advice of the Families in Focus Social worker as guidance, I keep in mind that I am the DSL for my setting and, ultimately, I have the responsibility to decide whether or not to share information and make a referral.

If a child lives outside of Bristol, I can find out the specific safeguarding procedures/appropriate agency for the child's location using South West Procedures.

Early Help (Family Support/ Families in Focus)

I am aware that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later when concerns are more acute and may require statutory intervention.

Children may need early help/early intervention for any of the following reasons which are listed in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, page 14.*

- disabled and has specific additional needs
- special educational needs
- young carer
- signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour
- frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- risk of modern slavery, trafficking, or exploitation

- risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as; family drug and alcohol misuse, mental health issues, domestic abuse
- misusing drugs or alcohol
- returned home to their family from care
- privately fostered
- a parent/carer in custody'

I know that, with a parent's consent, I can refer a parent for family support, (such as a parenting course, toddler group or 1 to1) at the Children's Centres, using the Request for Family Support form on the Bristol Early Years website Family Support | Bristol Early Years

I know that, with a parent's consent, I can request 'early help' through First Response. The early help might result in a referral to one of the three Families in Focus Teams.

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership guidance: Effective Support for Children and Families in Bristol is a framework to support my role as the DSL to help determine what level of support (universal, additional, intensive or specialist) a child and their family may need .

My procedure - injury to a non-mobile* baby

Bruising in a baby who has no independent mobility is very uncommon. It may be an indicator of a serious medical condition or physical abuse. Severe child abuse is six times more common in babies under one than in older children. Early years practitioners must follow the KBSP 'Multi-agency Guidance on Non-mobile Babies'.

If a non-mobile baby has an injury, however seemingly minor and however plausible the parent or carer's explanation, I must contact the on-**call Community Paediatrician (Tel.0117-9230000)** without delay to request advice on whether or not an examination is required. The Community Paediatrician will need to know the baby's name, date of birth, parent's contact details and the explanation which the parent has given for the injury (I will not offer any suggestion to the parent as to how the injury might have occurred).

If the Community Paediatrician deems that an examination is required, I will explain to the parent that someone with parental responsibility must give their consent to, and attend, the examination. I will discuss with the parent how they will get the child to the medical examination and the following day I will contact the hospital to confirm that the baby was taken to the examination. If a parent refuses to take the baby for an examination I must inform the Community Paediatrician and First Response.

After consulting with the Community Paediatrician and facilitating an examination (if needed), I must contact **First Response** to provide information about the injury. First Response will carry out Social Care checks. The Community Paediatrician will liaise with Social Care about any findings.

If a baby has bleeding from the nose, mouth, ear, or any other serious injury **I will call 999 for an ambulance**. After arranging the emergency response, I will seek an explanation from the parent and record this and the description of the injury. I will advise the on-call Community Paediatrician (Tel 0117 9230000) that an ambulance was called and First Response, so that Social Care checks can be made.

While accidental injury can occasionally occur in mobile babies it is still relatively rare (although not as rare as for non-mobile babies), therefore I am aware of the higher degree of risk of child-abuse to babies, whether mobile or non-mobile. If I am in any doubt about the plausibility of the explanation for an injury to a mobile baby, or if I am concerned about the severity of the injury, I will consult with the on-call Community Paediatrician or with First Response.

*Babies who are starting to roll or are sitting up (but cannot crawl) are classed as 'non-mobile'. In other words, a non-mobile baby is a baby who is not yet pulling to stand, crawling, cruising around furniture, or toddling. Once a baby is bum-shuffling, commando crawling, pulling to stand, cruising etc, they are classed as 'mobile'.

Responding to allegations

Should there be any allegations of serious harm or abuse about me, or about any person living, working or looking after children alongside me, I must inform the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** within a day, and also inform Ofsted as soon as practicable, but at the latest within fourteen days.

In addition to responding appropriately to allegations, I am aware that I must also inform the LADO within a day if I, or any member of my household or anyone working with the children who has: :

- **behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child**
- **possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child**
- **behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children** *(this could include if there are concerns about the person's behaviour towards their own child/ren or child/ren unrelated to their employment or voluntary work*
- **behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to** work with children *(this could include behaviour outside of the childminding setting for example in their personal life)*

When a non-recent allegation is made it should be reported to the LADO as the accused person may still be working with or have contact with children.

In addition to contacting the LADO and informing Ofsted, I would prioritise the children in my care, which is to consider if there is a child or children at risk. If there was a child at risk, I would follow the Child Protection Procedures and contact First Response.

To seek advice or make a referral to the LADO:

Telephone: 0117 90 37795

Email: LADO@bristol.gov.uk

LADO Referral Form: LADO Concerns Professionals Bristol Referral Form (bristolsafeguarding.org)

Report to Ofsted: Report-a-serious-childcare-incident

Note: if a childminder is unsure if an allegation or an incident meets the threshold to be reported, it is possible to consult with the LADO on this. Enhanced Provision childminders must also inform Dawn Butler, Early Years Manager. Tel: 07827 306287

Disqualification

I am aware that I must inform Ofsted within 14 days if ever I became disqualified from providing childcare as a result of a serious conviction, or disqualified by association because a member of my household has been convicted of a serious offence, such as those that are listed in the statutory guidance document *'Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006' All assistants will be required to fill out a 'disqualifications by association' form before they start at my setting, and will be required to inform me if there are any updates that I am required to know.*

The use of mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities

I seek permission from parents to take photographs of their children's learning journey and make it clear how I take and share those photographs with parents, whether by mobile phone or by camera. Electronic devices are password protected.

Should it be considered necessary for mobile phone calls and/or texts to be taken or made, efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to the children in my care. While I am caring for children phone calls are kept as brief as possible so as not to detract from the quality of supervision of the children. All service users, including parents/carers, visitors and contractors should be respectfully advised that their mobile phones or any other device such as smart watch for photos are not to be used in the setting.

Images of children must only be taken when they are in full and suitable dress. The taking or making of images in sensitive areas of the setting such as the bathroom, are not permitted. Photographs are not to be taken of any child should they suffer an injury whether it be accidental or non-accidental.

Childminders may wish here to refer to a separate policy on the use of mobile phones and other electronic gadgets in their work.

Childminders can use the Data Protection Policy to explain responsibilities under GDPR

E safety/online safety

I am aware of my responsibility to safeguard children and practitioners online. With internet enabled devices being a part of everyday life for children, early years settings provide a vital foundation for online safety education in today's digital age.

I will refer to the guidance 'Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (point 134, page 38)' to help embed online safety within my childminding setting, and to help safeguard children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material.

Visitors

While I am childminding, I may have visitors, such as another childminder, keeping the benefits to the children in mind. If any tradesperson or casual caller has to come into the house when my minded children are present, I will check their identity. I will never leave minded children unsupervised with a visitor.

Children's mental health

I am aware that children's behaviour reflects their state of mind – behaviour is a form of communication. Mental health problems in some cases can be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation *(Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 point 183, page 49).* I know that where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood *(Working Together to Safeguard Children, page 15).* As the DSL for my setting, if I am concerned that the cause of a child's distress may be as a result of abuse, then I would follow the child protection procedures. I can find information here on mental health for early years children on the government help for early years providers page.

I know that only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis, however, as a practitioner I am well placed to observe children on a day-to-day basis and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a social, emotional or mental health need.

I know that if I am concerned about a child's ongoing social, emotional or mental health needs, with parental consent I can consult with the Childminder SENCO to discuss appropriate referral to, for example, a Specialist Children's Centre Inclusion Practitioner (SCCIP), or an Educational Psychologist

Responding to different types of abuse

Children missing education

"Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines." (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, *point 178, page 48*). This would also include children who were in receipt of the Free Early Educational Entitlement, two-year-old funding or entitled to Enhanced provision care.

Within the context of private childcare, while there is no obligation for children to attend, nevertheless I am aware that sometimes missing attendance could be indicative of a safeguarding concern. If there is an unexplained or uncharacteristic absence, I will exercise some 'professional curiosity', without being intrusive.

- I will endeavour to keep in contact with parents and children (phone and email).
- If I could not contact the parents, depending on the extent of my concern, I would consider contacting the parent's emergency contact.
- I would consider contacting Families in Focus for some advice about how to respond, if I was worried about a child who was not attending my setting. *See 'Asking for advice as a solo DSL'*
- If children are already known to be vulnerable and have a Social Worker/ Placement Officer I would let the professional know of any concerns, including non-attendance.

Cuckooing

I have an awareness for the criminal practice for cuckooing, the exploitation risk of vulnerable adults.

Cuckooing is where a criminal (or abuser), or someone connected with them, befriends an individual who lives on their own. The criminal then moves in and uses the property to operate unlawfully or carry out an abusive activity. The person being cuckooed is often lonely, isolated, and vulnerable. I am aware that Cuckooing can affect the victim's ability to parent and to meet a child's needs. *(Extracted from Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership* website).

KBSP and partners have put together a leaflet on Cuckooing and Covid-19. Cuckooing and Covid-19 leaflet

Domestic Abuse

I am aware that domestic abuse can involve any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, or violence between family members. Children who witness domestic violence and abuse (even if they are not physically present) may feel fear, guilt, shame, sleep disturbances, sadness, depression, and anger (at both the abuser for the violence and at the other parent for being unable to protect them).

I am aware that the younger the child, the higher the risk to their safety, including to an unborn child. I am aware that domestic abuse can often go hand in hand with other forms of child abuse. I am aware that domestic abuse can be triggered by pregnancy and there is, in fact, an increased risk of violence after partners separate. I am aware that domestic abuse can affect the victim's ability to parent and to meet a child's needs.

I know that any conversations with a parent who is experiencing coercive behaviour, should be held in private with that parent alone. I need to think about the safety of the victim and child and bear in mind that an abuser may not seem abusive to me.

I would seek to support a victim on their own terms. I can signpost a parent to services which are listed on the Bristol City Council website https://www.bristol.gov.uk/crime-emergencies/abuse-violence

Bristol City Council has many resources for parents on the Relationships Matters website.

I must also consider the impact of domestic abuse on the child and respond appropriately. To support my decision-making I can take advice from a Families in Focus Social Worker and use the indicators of need and effective support for children and families documents on the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership website:

Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership: Indicators of need (bristolsafeguarding.org)

Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership: Effective Support for Children and Families in Bristol (bristolsafeguarding.org)

- I can make a request for help from Families in Focus (via First Response and with the parent's consent).
- if there is serious physical violence or if a child is at risk of physical violence by being in the line of fire or if they seek to protect the adult victim; I would make a child protection referral to First Response
- I would call 999 if there is immediate danger.

Extra-familial abuse / contextual safeguarding

I am aware that abuse of older children can take place in contexts beyond the home and family. Extra-familial abuse is sometimes referred to as 'contextual safeguarding' and can include child sexual exploitation (CSE), for example, encouraging a child to share an image of themselves undressed ('sexting'); and/or child criminal exploitation (CCE) of children, for example, 'county lines' when a criminal gang use children to store, supply and sell drugs and money. Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child perpetrator is also recognised as a victim.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
Further information on signs of a child's involvement in sexual exploitation is available in Home Office guidance: Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

County lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of schools. Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office and The Children's Society. County Lines Toolkit For Professionals Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

(Information from: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, page 150)

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

Female circumcision is illegal in the UK, and it is an offence to take UK nationals abroad to aid, abet or carry out FGM. I have a statutory responsibility to safeguard children from being abused through FGM. If I am concerned that a girl is at risk of FGM this is a child protection issue and must be documented and reported to First Response and or the police.

Some warning signs that may indicate a girl is at risk of FGM include:

• Parents requesting an extended leave from school on top of school holidays

• If a girl comes from a country that has high prevalence of FGM

• Mother and other siblings have already undergone FGM

• Child may indicate that they are going for a special event.

If I have suspicions that a girl may have been subjected to FGM or that she is at risk of being subjected to FGM either in this country or abroad, I should make a referral to First Response. I am aware that a 'known' case of FGM must be reported to the police as a crime, using Tel 101.

Grooming

I am aware of the kinds of inappropriate adult behaviour towards children which are the indicators of sexual abuse in a perpetrator, and to which I must respond appropriately and promptly.

Honour Based Violence/Abuse

I am aware of Honour based violence, and how this is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code.

It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members. Women, men and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse. Honour'-based abuse includes Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage.

A protocol on the handling of 'so-called' Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage Offences is available for further advice. There is also local guidance available on the South West Child Protection Procedures.

Advice and Support - To see which services can support someone experiencing honour based violence or forced marriage, visit the Support for Bristol Residents page.

(Extracted from *Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership* website)

The Prevent Duty

Childminders and assistants should be aware of the Prevent Duty which is a safeguarding responsibility on all childcare providers and other agencies, to prevent people from being radicalised to reduce the risk of them becoming involved in or supporting terrorism. As with managing other safeguarding risks, there isn't a single way of identifying an individual who is being radicalised, but causes of concern could be, for example: someone who is viewing extreme, violent propaganda online, or expressing extremist views which may lead to an act of terrorism, talking as if from a scripted speech and changes in behaviour.

It is my responsibility to know how to refer someone who may be vulnerable to radicalisation, or the effect of radicalisation, and know how to respond. I will be alert to changes in children's behaviour or circumstances which could indicate that they may need help or protection. I understand that the Prevent deals with all kinds of extremist ideology leading to acts of terrorism, including Islamist ideology (*such as ISIS which is an Islamist terrorist group active in Iraq and Syria following an extreme interpretation of Islam)* and Extreme Right-Wing ideology *(such as National Action which is a racist neo-Nazi group)*.

If I observe any behaviour of concern, I would inform **both First Response Tel 0117 9036444** and the local Prevent Team, also called the **South West Counter- terrorism Team (SWCT) Tel 01278 647466** or channelsw@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk

In respect of the Prevent Duty and in keeping with the ethos of the EYFS, I will promote British Values, which are: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.

I will promote British Values in an age-appropriate way, ensuring that children: learn right from wrong; mix and share with other children; value other's views; know about similarities and differences between themselves and others; and can question or challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes in others.

Childminder assistants: suitability and induction

If I work with an assistant, that assistant must have an Ofsted, Enhanced DBS. I must also inform Ofsted https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-report-new-adults-in-the-home and receive 'a letter of suitability', following the DBS and Social Care check.

If I recruit an assistant/student placement who is not a member of my household, in addition to the Ofsted checks on suitability, I myself will also vet the assistant by gathering: references; the person's right to work in the UK; employment history; record of qualification; information about health; and by noting the DBS outcome.

Before recruiting an assistant, I explain my responsibility with regard to 'disqualification by association' and ask the assistant to sign a self-declaration about not only their own suitability but also the suitability of anyone they live with. I should make it clear to assistants that they should inform me of any change in their circumstances with regard to convictions while they are working with me. *The self-declaration form proforma can be found on the Bristol Early Years website in the childminders' section.*

When assistants start work, I have an induction process covering the policies and procedures of my setting, including a 'staff behaviour policy/code of conduct' which describes my expectations of the assistant with regard to: supervision of the assistant; confidentiality with regard to the minded children and their families and also to my own family; taking photographs of children; the use of mobile phones within my setting; electronic safety (esafety) within my setting; and the appropriate use of social networking sites.

Low-level concerns. In accordance with *Keeping Children in Safe in Education 2024*, my Staff Behaviour Policy/Code of Conduct should include how I respond to low-level concerns about my staff/assistants. I record low-level concerns. I should identify inappropriate behaviour early and deal with it, to minimize the risk of abuse. I will be clear about professional boundaries and the values of my setting at the outset.

Low-level concerns are concerns which are below the harm threshold: not serious enough to refer to the LADO, but which cause unease or nagging doubt. A low-level concern does not mean that it is insignificant, for example, the use of inappropriate language; having favourites; humiliating a child, commenting about work on Facebook. I know I can contact the LADO for advice about whether or not a low-level concern meets the threshold to be reported to the LADO.

If I suspected that a minded child in my setting (or indeed any child) had been abused by an assistant, I should inform the LADO (see telephone number at the end of this policy)

My DSL responsibility to assistants

I understand that I have the lead responsibility for safeguarding within my childminding setting. When working with any assistant (including family members) I must ensure that they have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues and understand the procedure to be followed in the event of any concern being raised. I understand that I should provide supervision to my assistant, ensuring that there is opportunity to raise any issues or concerns about children's well-being.

Assistants and whistleblowing

At induction I make it clear to my assistant that they can bring their concerns or grievances to me in the first instance (an assistant can use the ACAS helpline https://www.acas.org.uk for grievances about employment conditions), but if the assistant had a serious concern about the quality of early years practice within my setting they should know that they can phone the Ofsted CIE line Tel: 0300 123 4666 or email their concern to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

If an assistant ever thought that I (the childminder) was being abusive to a child, they should phone the LADO (refer to the allegation section within this policy). It depends on the threshold of the concern whether Ofsted or the LADO is contacted: if an assistant was unsure as to whether or not their concern met the threshold for the LADO, in other words, whether or not it was an 'allegation', then the assistant can consult with the LADO about this.

Childminders with assistants can consider having a separate Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct Policy that is separate to this Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

Childminders can take advice on matters of employment from ACAS, and should there be any need for disciplinary procedures, can use the ACAS helpline https://www.acas.org.uk/contact

It is good practice to get an assistant to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. You can find a template for this in the childminders' section of the Bristol Early Years website.

Advice about whistle-blowing childminder-colleagues

From time-to-time childminders may be uncomfortable about the quality of care provided by a colleague-childminder. It is best for childminders to be professional and upfront with each other and to try and support the development of good practice through discussion. Childminding Support Workers and Lead Teachers have a 'support and challenge' function, but if they have not witnessed an actual incident there are issues of confidentiality, so it tends to be better that the childminder talks directly to their colleague-childminder. If a childminder is concerned about harm or potential harm, whistleblowing is necessary to ensure the well-being of a child or children. The CIE Ofsted line Tel: 0300 123 4666 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk can be used to report serous concerns about childcare practice.

At the level of harm or potential harm, concerns should be reported to the LADO. If in doubt about what would constitute an allegation of abuse, refer to the allegations section within this policy or contact the LADO for advice.