



Statement of Purpose

Aims and Objectives

To provide a stimulating safe and learning environment for children from ages of 2years 10 months up to and including 3 years to develop through play as equals whilst acknowledging their individual needs. We aim to give them the opportunity to develop as valued individuals.

- To learn through play in a safe, stimulating environment
- To enjoy the company of other children, interact and socialise
- To build relationships with adults away from the family in a safe environment.
- To take part in a group which values everyone, whatever their race, gender, cultural background or special needs
- To develop his/her own character with the encouragement and support of adults
- To grow in self-confidence encouraging the ability to choose from a range of activities in a caring environment
- To develop independence of their own by managing apart from parents/guardians

We strive to create a welcoming atmosphere with approachable staff to help create effective communication between parents and practitioners. When parents and practitioners work together, the results have a positive impact on the child's development and learning. We currently employ 3 qualified child care workers.

Admissions

The Treehouse playgroup is open to all members of the community and we do not discriminate against any child or their family, on the basis of colour, ethnicity, religion or social background. Our admissions policy is based on a fair system fully open to all members of our community and to all children who may have disability or special educational needs. We will try to make any reasonable adjustments necessary to include all children.

Children will be admitted to The Treehouse on a first come first served basis. Each form received will be allocated a number but after the January of the year of attendance, forms received will be allocated on age, older children being given priority. We do accept children who are in the process of potty training providing they come in a pull-up. Consent forms must be signed to allow members of staff to change a child who needs it.

Hours of Opening

The playgroup is open on four mornings a week Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9.15 am – 12.15 pm.

Contact Information

The Treehouse Playgroup @ Strand
Strand Presbyterian Church
161 Connsbrook Avenue
Belfast BT4 1JY

Playgroup Leader can be contacted by:
Telephone: 07731488408
Email: marie.cameron@hotmail.co.uk



Designated Officer for Child Protection: Marie Cameron 07731488408
Deputy Designated Office for Child Protection: Elaine Millar 07788517686
First Aider: Marie Cameron

Daily Routine

9.15 am	Doors open and children welcomed
9.15-10.00 am	Free play including craft activity
10.00 am	Snack time
10.20-11.00 am	Free play including directed game and/or craft activity
11.00-11.15 am	Tidy up time and move to circle time area
11.15-11.30am	Circle time including sharing, singing and music
11.30-12.00 noon	Physical play
12.00-12.15 pm	Story time
12.15 pm	Home time

Charges and Fees

The price for each session is £8.00 plus 25p per day for snack. Children may come for all sessions or as many as their parents wish.

All fees and break money should be placed in a sealed envelope with your child's name, amount of money and the date clearly written on the front of it. This is to avoid any confusion for staff

Parents are still required to pay their fee even if their child is absent. In cases of prolonged absence, parents should consult the Playgroup Leader in respect to fee payment where exceptional circumstances will be considered at the committee's discretion.

Each child's attendance at the group is conditional upon continued payment of any necessary fees.

Registration and Insurance Information

The Treehouse Playgroup is registered with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and is inspected annually by them. We are also a member of the 'Early Years Organisation for Young Children'.

Public Liability Insurance is provided by Allianz. A copy of the certificate is on display on the notice board in the hallway/waiting area.

Partnership with Parents Policy

Principle

"Parents are the first educators of their children and should be involved at all times in their education and development".

Policy on Early Years Provision in N.I. 1994



Policy Statement

The Treehouse Playgroup recognises the vital role that parents have in their children's lives. All members of staff try to involve and support parents in the education and development of their children through a process of consultation and dialogue.

Procedures

- Parents will be encouraged to visit the playgroup on a Parents Night where policies and procedures will be explained and an overview of the daily, monthly and yearly plans will be shown.
- Parents will be invited to meet the playgroup leader to discuss their child's progress. We will try to accommodate parents as regards to time.
- Parents are also welcome to chat informally to staff at pick up time.
- All parents will receive a monthly Newsletter.
- Comment and suggestion books will be on display in the entrance hall.
- Parents will be encouraged to visit the playgroup and share with the children and staff any areas of expertise or interest they feel would be beneficial.
- Parents will be encouraged to become part of the committee to be involved with policy review and fundraising efforts. The day to day running of the playgroup will be left in the hands of the qualified staff.

Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

Principle

The Treehouse Playgroup is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children; promoting their rights and best interests.

This policy outlines the protection of children by identifying clear instructions in accordance with the legislative framework of The Children (NI) Order 1995, taking into consideration the five main principles of the Order, the first being "the welfare of the child is paramount".

Policy

Everyone at The Treehouse Playgroup who comes into contact with children and their families have a duty to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. At The Treehouse Playgroup management/staff/volunteers will work with children, parents/carers and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

- The Treehouse Playgroup promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, culture traditions and home background.
- The Treehouse Playgroup promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- The Treehouse Playgroup promotes children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.



- The Treehouse Playgroup helps children establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- The Treehouse Playgroup works with parents/carers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

Procedure

In accordance with Trust Guidelines, Our Duty to Care and Social Services at The Treehouse Playgroup we will endeavour to safeguard children by:

Key commitment 1

The Treehouse Playgroup is committed to building a culture of safety in which children are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery.

Staff/Students/Trainees and Volunteers

- Our Designated Child Protection Officer is: Marie Cameron 07731 488 408
- Our Deputy Child Protection Officer is: Elaine Millar 07788 517 686

At The Treehouse Playgroup we endeavour to ensure that:

- All staff and parents/carers are made aware of our safeguarding policy and procedures.
- The Treehouse Playgroup provides adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children.
- Candidates are informed of the need to carry out 'enhanced disclosure' checks with the current up to date vetting procedures before posts can be confirmed. No person will be placed in a position (either paid or unpaid) which involves contact with children without being properly and effectively vetted.
- Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- The setting adheres to the Health and Social Care Trust requirements in respect of references and criminal record checks for staff/students/trainees and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Students/trainees/volunteers do not work unsupervised.
- The Treehouse Playgroup adheres to the relevant guidelines in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
- The Treehouse Playgroup has a procedure for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
- There are security steps in place to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.

Key commitment 2

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set out.

Responding to suspicions of abuse



- All those working with children are aware that abuse of children can take different forms – physical, emotional and sexual, as well as neglect.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or through changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key worker/staff member makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the setting leader who is acting as the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will refer concerns to the Gateway team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation.
- Those involved will take care not to influence the outcome either through the way they speak to children or by asking questions of children.

The management team will use detailed procedures and reporting format when making a referral to Gateway.

- Contact Early Years Link Social Worker/Early Years Team.
- Where a child is already known to Social Services and has a social worker, we will contact them directly.

Contact details are: Karen Crawford Tel: 028 9504 2811

Recording suspicions of abuse

Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour, deterioration in general well-being, unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect, a member of staff will:

- Listen to the child, offer reassurance and give assurance that he/she will take action.
- Not question the child.
- Make a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
 - the date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
 - the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible;
 - the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time;
 - the names of any other person present at the time.

These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file which is kept securely and confidentially.

Making a referral to Gateway

- The Treehouse Playgroup will follow any procedures that the Gateway team has in place.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will also inform our link social worker that we have made a referral to the Gateway team.
- Where the child already has a social worker, The Treehouse Playgroup will contact them directly.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will retain a copy of any forms filled in for Gateway in the child's personal file.
- All staff are aware of the referral procedures for recording and reporting.



- **Contact details for Gateway Team are:** Tel. 028 9050 7000 (9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Tel. 028 9504 9999 (Eve, W/ends, Bank Holiday)

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact.
- If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where guidance does not allow this.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases the investigating officer will inform parents.

Liaison with other agencies

- The Treehouse Playgroup will work with the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.
- All staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- The Treehouse Playgroup has procedures for contacting the Health and Social Care Trust on child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and the Trust to work well together.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will notify the Health and Social Care Trust of any incident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children.
- If a referral is to be made to the Gateway team, The Treehouse Playgroup will act within the area's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.

Allegations against staff

- The Treehouse Playgroup ensures that all parents know the complaints policy if they have concerns regarding the behaviour or actions of staff/students/trainees/volunteers within the setting.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will follow the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust when responding to any complaint that a parent/carer has put forward.
- The Treehouse Playgroup will respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff, student/trainee/volunteer within the setting, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- Management will refer any such complaint immediately to the Gateway team and the link social worker to investigate. The Treehouse Playgroup is aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- The Management of The Treehouse Playgroup will co-operate fully with any investigation carried out by the Gateway team/Early Years Team.

- Where the management team and Health and Social Care Trust agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, management will suspend the member of staff/student/trainee/volunteer, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as the children and families throughout the process.



Disciplinary action

- Where a member of staff/student/trainee/volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children, management will notify Gateway/Early Years and the Independent Safeguarding Authority of relevant information so that individuals who pose a threat to children (and vulnerable adults), can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

Key commitment 3

The Treehouse Playgroup is committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout child protection training for staff. The Treehouse Playgroup is also committed to empowering young children, through our curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

Training

- Management will seek out training opportunities for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and that they are aware of the Health and Social Care Trust guidelines for making referrals.
- Management will ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns in the setting.
- Management will ensure that staff/volunteers are trained in Safeguarding Children/Child Protection in line with current regulations and this will be reviewed annually at staff appraisals where training needs can be identified.

Planning

- The layout of the room allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff/volunteer/students/trainees in a one-to-one situation without being visible to others.

Curriculum

- The Treehouse Playgroup introduces key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and that they may develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- The Treehouse Playgroup creates a culture of value and respect for every individual within the setting, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.

We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for all children.



Confidentiality

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Health and Social Care Trust.

Support to families

- The Treehouse Playgroup believes in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff/students/trainees/volunteers in the group.
- The Treehouse Playgroup makes clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the Health and Social Care Trust.
- The Treehouse Playgroup follows child protection guidelines as set out by Health and Social Care Trust in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with Health and Social Care Trust guidelines.

Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCNI)

The Treehouse Playgroup is aware of the referral system of UNOCNI – Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland. The registering social worker and the Gateway Team will keep us informed of any changes and training available.

Contact details are: Early Years Team

Links with other policies:

Anti-Bullying Policy
Complaints Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Equal Opportunities Policy
Staff development and training
Whistleblowing Policy

Behaviour Management Policy

It is our policy to use a positive approach to challenging behaviour. We will try to show by good example the kind of behaviour expected in playgroup, by being kind and considerate of others and always talking calmly and quietly to the children. All staff should aim at all times to be consistent, fair and firm in their dealings with the children.

Children can become disruptive for a number of reasons and bored children tend to lack purpose and can feel insecure. A well planned and predictable sequence of activities can provide children with the security and sense of control they need. Rules are necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and staff. These are kept to a minimum and should emphasise a positive approach.

- A predictable daily routine will be established and maintained.
- Routine should include a balance of child and adult initiated activities.



- Children should have access to a wide variety of materials and activities giving them the opportunity to make choices throughout the session.
- The room should be divided into distinct play areas which give several children enough space to play together.
- Children are encouraged to walk when indoors.
- Children are encouraged to keep sand inside the sand tray and throwing of sand will not be accepted.
- Deliberate disruption of another child's play will result in the child being moved to another activity while an explanation is given.
- Toys should be tidied up after use and the children encouraged to help in this.
- Children will be praised for work well done or use of acceptable behaviour. Staff will be encouraged to actively seek reasons to give praise.

Exclusion Procedures

1. If a child becomes unwell while at Playgroup the Playgroup Leader must be informed.
2. If there is any chance of infection being passed on to other children, the child should be isolated in another room.
3. Make the child as comfortable as possible and reassure them.
4. The member of staff caring for the child should record the incident and information carefully.
5. Parents will be contacted immediately.
6. Other children will be reassured and Playgroup should continue as normally as possible.

Childhood Illness

In order to avoid the spread of infection please do not bring your child to playgroup if they are ill. Vomiting and diarrhoea are particularly contagious and we would ask that you keep your child at home until they are well again. Playgroup staff should be informed immediately of any child taking a course of antibiotics.

Complaints Procedure

At the Treehouse we believe that children, parents and members of staff are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our playgroup and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result; we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns.

Aim

We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our playgroup to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.



Methods

To achieve this, we operate the following Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1

Any parent or staff member who is uneasy about an aspect of the playgroup provision talks over, first of all his/her worries and anxieties with:

- a) Playgroup Leader Marie Cameron 07731 488 408 or
- b) The chair of the playgroup committee Martin Hampton 07765 124 702

Any parent or staff member who requires a written response to their concerns should request one at this stage.

Stage 2

If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent or staff member moves on by making a formal complaint in writing. The complainant can expect a written reply in acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint, as well as some indication of how and when the complaint will be addressed within 5 working days.

Stage 3

When a formal complaint has been fully investigated, the Playgroup Leader should ensure that the person who made the complaint is informed, in writing, of the outcome.

Stage 4

If the person who made the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they should contact

Link Social Worker: Karen Crawford

Early Years Services
Everton Complex
585-587 Crumlin Road
BELFAST
BT14 7GB

TEL: 028 9504 2811



Policies

At the beginning of a new year all Parents/Guardians will be informed of the following policies and will be asked to sign and date that they have read, understood and agreed them.

- Admissions
- Collection
- Arrival and Departure
- Settling In
- Confidentiality
- Complaints
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Toy replacement
- Special Educational Needs
- Staff Development and Training
- Partnership with Parents
- Play
- Behaviour Management
- Toileting
- Equal Opportunities
- Anti-bullying
- Whistle Blowing
- Healthy Eating
- Safety
- Hygiene
- Data Protection
- Photographic and Filming
- Mobile Phone
- Social Networking
- ICT Policy
- Risk Assessment
- Health and Safety
- Absence of Manager
- Exclusion Procedures
- Childhood Illnesses
- Curriculum

A hard copy of all policies will be available in the Playgroup room at all times and can be accessed via the Church website.

Consent will be obtained from Parents/Guardian in relation to the following:

- Observations
- Use of Photographs
- Management of Medicines
- Application of Suncream
- First Aid
- Handling of Animals
- Intimate and personal care



- Trips to local park

Special Education Needs

Principle: - "It is the state's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to protect their rights. *"UN Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991*

Policy Statement: - The Treehouse Playgroup will wherever possible provide for the needs of children who have particular special educational needs. We recognise the wide range of special educational needs of children and will consider what part we will play in meeting these needs. All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured.

Procedures

- The Treehouse Playgroup will endeavour to ensure that children's special educational needs are identified and that suitable action is taken to address these needs. We will seek appropriate help and advice from other relevant professionals and involve parents fully.
- We will provide children with individual programmes if required which address their specific needs.
- Children with special educational needs will be integrated as fully as possible with the other children and into the daily programme of activities in the playgroup.
- The development of children with special educational needs will be observed carefully and the information gained will be used to inform the regular review of their individual plans.
- We will ensure that all children are treated as equals and are encouraged to take part in every aspect of playgroup activities.
- This policy will be reviewed annually.

Range of Resources

- Water and sand play
- A range of Jigsaws/puzzles
- Dressing up and role play incl. play kitchen and dolls prams
- Small world play
- A wide range of table top toys incl. animals, peg boards, treehouse, threading
- Art/Craft activities incl. paint, dough, colouring in, messy play, chalk
- Ride on toys, cars, trikes, scooter and slide
- Outdoor balance beams, bean bags, hula hoops, bubble machines, pavement chalk
- A range of musical instruments
- Quiet area and reading corner
- Building blocks of various sizes
- A range of board/card games to encourage taking turns and sharing



Deployment of staff

At the Treehouse playgroup we operate on a ratio of 1:8. 1 adult to every 8 children. Where an additional need is recognised this will be reviewed to ensure a safe environment.

Activities provided

- Art and crafts
- Music and movement
- Physical play
- Pretend play
- Farm visit to playgroup
- Visits from Fire, police, ambulance service
- Seasonal and Holiday activities

Role of Health and Social Care Trust

The Treehouse playgroup is subject to an annual inspection by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Parents will be asked for their feedback prior to this taking place. A Notice of Inspection will be displayed on the playgroup noticeboard for the month prior to inspection taking place. This is to ensure that the playgroup meets the minimum standards of care and is a requirement for all playgroups, for further information parents/ guardians should consult The Minimum Standards for Day Care and Childminding for children under 12.

Recording practice

All records will be kept in a secure locked cabinet kept in the playgroup store. These are held in accordance to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 as stated in the Data Protection Policy which can be viewed in the policy documents located in the playgroup room. Records are only kept for a limited amount of time (3 years) and are shredded after this time has elapsed. Health and Social Care Trust will have access to these records where the need arises.