**CHILD PROTECTION – INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

*(from an old leaflet produced by Social Work Team and still relevant)*

**Our responsibility to children:**

It is the responsibility of everyone involved with children to help protect them from abuse. This is not just a question of reporting concerns to the “prper authorities”, however important that is, but also of helping parents under stress care for their children adequately.

**Where there are worries and concerns about a child in your care**

Such as:

* Sudden change in behaviour
* Major, minor injuries and bruises that do match the explanation given
* Clinginess, distressed crying
* Demanding/difficult behaviour
* Food refusal or excessive interest in food
* Weight loss
* Aggressive play
* Soiling or wetting
* Not wanting to be changed
* Pain on passing water
* Speech delays

Individually, any of these signs and symptoms may not necessarily be an indicator of abuse, but can be a sign of a number of possible problems for the child e.g:

* Physical discomfort or illness
* Developmental delay
* Family problems causing stress at home
* Child abuse

The only way to find out which it might be is to talk about it.

**Maintain good channels of communication with the parents.**

If you have an open, clear understanding with the parents about your role and responsibilities you will find it easier to deal with more awkward situations as they arise. Parents will be expecting you to want to share all kinds of information, including worries. You will both be used to those routine recording of minor incidents and events as part of sharing a planned approach to the care of the children.

*The parents will also know from the beginning that you have a duty as early years provider to seek further advice where you at all unsure.*

**The child.**

Sometime children offer brief words themselves about what has happened to them. The “offering” may well come because you have naturally asked them something like “Oh dear! What has happened to your leg?” The answer may take you by surprise and make you uncomfortable.

It is important that you remain calm. Give whatever simple response you would normally use to acknowledge a child’s words and to reassure them. Move on to something else as soon as the child is ready (often straight away).

*Resist interrogating!*

*It is not usually a good idea to call in a witness.*

*Record – Consult*

**Have clear, consistent recording practices.**

This includes daycare records, permission forms, a duplicate receipt type book for accidents/incidents, and any other information you may wish confirmed as being shared e.g.: agreements about specific diets.

*Know the child – Be alert-Observe-Record*

**Sharing concerns.**

In most cases, this should be done with the parent’s knowledge although it may not always be with their consent.

For advice you can speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Health Visitor or Duty Social Worker at MASH.

Any significant evidence or concerns with regards to possible neglect or abuse should be referred to MASH, for a consultation and a decision regarding a formal referral.

Make a note of the details of any calls made or action taken. Include the name of the person to whom you spoke and when. This matter could lead to a criminal investigation – whatever is said, done or recorded could become evidence.

**Respect and protect confidentiality.**

When you find that you are worrying about a child in your care, it is natural to want to discuss it. However. It is vital to remember that any information is strictly confidential and should not be discussed openly or when children are present if possible. You should not do so either, other that when speaking to the DSL or the MASH team (telephone numbers on noticeboard, in Daycare Record folder or in Staff Handbook)

**The parent.**

We have found that most day care arrangements continue even where concerns move to full investigations. They survive best where:

* There has been an open relationship.
* The parent has not felt judged or accused by the carer.
* The carer has only recorded and discussed what has been seen and heard, not what is thought.

On a remarkable number of occasions, the parents have welcomed the interest and support of the carer.

**You.**

Where concerns need to be followed up, MASH will investigate. There is a set procedure which must be followed. As part of any investigation, information will be gathered from other agencies and you us.