



Responding to Disclosures, Recording Concerns and Referral Procedures

Purpose

Woodlands recognises that children may communicate concerns in different ways. Children aged 1–5 years may disclose information verbally, through their behaviour, play, drawings, emotions or changes in presentation.

All concerns must be treated seriously. Staff must respond in a way that protects the child, preserves evidence and ensures appropriate support is provided.

Staff must remember:

It is not their role to investigate abuse. Their role is to recognise, respond, record and report.

If a Child Makes a Disclosure

A disclosure occurs when a child shares information that suggests they may have experienced harm, abuse or neglect.

If a child speaks to a member of staff about something worrying:

Staff should:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Allow the child to speak at their own pace.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling them.
- Explain that they may need to share the information with someone who can help keep them safe.
- Use the child's own words when recording the disclosure.
- Report immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Staff Must Not

Staff must not:

- Promise to keep secrets.
- Ask leading questions.
- Interrogate the child.
- Ask "why" questions.
- Suggest answers.
- Show shock or disbelief.
- Make assumptions.
- Investigate the concern themselves.
- Discuss the disclosure with other staff members unless they need to know.

Examples of inappropriate questions:

- "Did your dad hurt you?"
- "Was mummy angry?"
- "Are you sure?"

Appropriate responses:

- "Can you tell me more about that?"
- "What happened next?"
- "Thank you for telling me."

Recording a Disclosure

A written record must be completed as soon as possible after the concern arises.

Records must include:

- Date and time of the concern.
- Child's name.
- Who was present.
- What was seen or heard.
- The child's exact words where possible.
- Any actions taken.
- Who the concern was reported to.

Safeguarding Recording Requirements

All safeguarding records must be:

- Clear.
- Factual.
- Accurate.
- Signed and dated.
- Stored securely.
- Accessed only by authorised personnel.

Woodlands will maintain safeguarding records separately from general childcare records.

Safeguarding records may include:

- Cause for concern forms.
- Body maps.
- Chronologies.
- Referral records.
- Meeting notes.
- Multi-agency information.

Body Maps

Where injuries or marks are observed, staff may be required to complete a body map.

Body maps must:

- Show the location of the injury accurately.
- Include size, colour and description.
- Avoid assumptions about how the injury occurred.
- Be completed sensitively.

Staff must never delay reporting a concern while completing paperwork.

The child's immediate safety comes first.

Role of the DSL Following a Concern

When a concern is reported, the DSL will:

- Review the information.
- Consider the child's immediate safety.
- Decide whether further action is required.
- Seek advice where necessary.
- Make appropriate referrals.
- Record decisions and rationale.
- Continue monitoring and supporting the child.

The DSL will consider:

- The child's age and development.
- Frequency and pattern of concerns.
- Severity of the concern.
- Previous history.
- Family circumstances.
- Information from other professionals.

Suffolk Safeguarding Referral Procedures

Woodlands follows the safeguarding procedures of Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

Where a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm, the DSL will contact:

Suffolk Customer First (Children's Services)

A referral will be made where concerns indicate that a child may need statutory intervention.

The DSL may seek professional advice where the threshold for referral is unclear.

All referrals and advice received will be recorded.

Immediate Risk of Harm

If a child is in immediate danger:

Staff must:

1. Take immediate action to keep the child safe.
2. Contact emergency services by calling **999** where required.
3. Inform the DSL or Manager as soon as possible.
4. Record all actions taken.

A concern must never be delayed because a DSL is unavailable.

Thresholds and Early Help

Not every concern requires a statutory safeguarding referral.

Woodlands recognises the importance of early intervention.

Support may include:

- Discussions with parents.
- Signposting to services.
- Early Help support.
- Working alongside health visitors.
- Working with other professionals.

However, parental disagreement does not prevent Woodlands from making a referral where staff believe a child may be at risk.

Information Sharing

Woodlands follows the principle that information should be shared:

- Lawfully.
- Proportionately.
- Securely.
- In the best interests of the child.

Consent is not always required when sharing information to safeguard a child.

Staff must not allow concerns about confidentiality to prevent necessary safeguarding action.

Confidentiality

Safeguarding information must only be shared with those who need it to protect a child.

Staff must not:

- Discuss safeguarding concerns with other parents.
- Discuss cases outside professional settings.
- Share information on social media.
- Store safeguarding information on personal devices.

Escalation and Professional Challenge

Woodlands expects staff to challenge decisions appropriately where they believe a child's needs are not being met.

If staff disagree with a safeguarding decision, they should:

1. Discuss concerns with the DSL.
2. Escalate to the Manager.
3. Escalate to the Chair of Trustees where appropriate.
4. Seek advice from safeguarding professionals.

Professional challenge is an important part of safeguarding practice.

Parents and Safeguarding Referrals

Woodlands aims to work openly with parents wherever possible.

However, parents will not always be informed before a referral where:

- doing so may place the child at increased risk;
- it may compromise an investigation;
- advice from safeguarding professionals indicates it is inappropriate.

The child's safety remains the priority.

Following a Safeguarding Incident

Following a safeguarding concern, Woodlands will:

- Review actions taken.
- Consider whether further support is needed.
- Identify learning.
- Update risk assessments where necessary.
- Provide staff support.
- Share learning appropriately.

Safeguarding practice is continually reviewed to improve outcomes for children.

Key Safeguarding Message

At Woodlands:

Recognise → Respond → Record → Report → Review

Every adult has a responsibility to act when they have concerns about a child.

A small concern today may prevent significant harm tomorrow.