

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Looked after children

Policy statement

Ready Steady Grow Pre-School is committed to offering high-quality, inclusive early years provision based on equality of opportunity for all children. We recognise that **Looked After Children (LAC)** and **Previously Looked After Children (PLAC)** can face additional barriers to learning, emotional stability, and well-being due to earlier experiences of trauma, loss, or instability.

We are committed to:

- providing a nurturing, predictable, attachment-aware environment;
- working collaboratively with the child's foster carer, social worker, and the Bromley Virtual School;
- ensuring LAC/PLAC children receive personalised support to help them thrive;
- promoting each child's right to safety, stability, belonging, and respect;
- ensuring their voice is heard and considered in all decision-making appropriate to their age and stage.

Children may come into care for a number of reasons. Whatever the circumstances, the experience of separation from their home and family can impact their emotional well-being, behaviour, and readiness to learn. High-quality early years provision can play a crucial role in building resilience and supporting recovery.

We have high aspirations for all LAC/PLAC children and recognise their entitlement to targeted support, stability, and a designated lead professional within the setting.

Legislative and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by the following statutory guidance and legislation:

- *Children Act 1989 & 2004*
- *Children and Social Work Act 2017*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*
- *EYFS Statutory Framework 2024*
- *Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children (DfE 2015)*
- *Education for Looked After Children (DfE Virtual Schools Guidance)*
- *Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR*
- *London Child Protection Procedures*
- Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) policies
- Bromley Virtual School guidance for Early Years

Definitions

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Looked After Child (LAC): A child who is subject to a Care Order under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 or accommodated under Section 20 (voluntary care).

Previously Looked After Child (PLAC): A child who is no longer looked after because they have been adopted, are subject to a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), or a Child Arrangements Order (CAO).

Corporate Parent: The Local Authority responsible for safeguarding the child's welfare and outcomes.

Key Principles

We commit to:

- **Attachment-Aware Practice**

We recognise the importance of attachment, attunement, emotional co-regulation, and consistency for LAC/PLAC. Staff receive guidance or training to ensure practice supports children who may have experienced trauma.

- **Stability and Continuity**

We aim to ensure consistency in routines, staffing, expectations, and communication, reducing additional stress for the child.

- **Partnership Working**

We work collaboratively with:

- the child's allocated social worker,
- foster carer(s),
- birth parents (where appropriate and agreed),
- Bromley Virtual School,
- health professionals,
- Bromley Early Years SEND team, and
- any relevant multi-agency professionals.

- **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Information about a child's looked after status is kept strictly confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis in line with statutory guidance and the care plan.

Admissions and Entitlement

- **Two-Year-Old Funded Places**

We offer funded 2-year places for looked after children where:

- the foster placement has been stable for at least two months, and
- the child shows signs of secure attachment to their foster carer.

- **Universal Early Education Entitlement (3-4 Years)**

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

We offer funded places for all LAC/PLAC children aged 3-4.

We expect the child to have been with their foster carer for at least one month, demonstrating signs of forming a secure attachment.

- **'Stay and Play' Transitional Offer**

Where a foster placement is new, temporary, or still stabilising, we will offer extended settling-in sessions and stay-and-play to support emotional security and trust building.

- **Children Already Attending Who Enter Care**

Where a child already attending our setting becomes looked after, we commit to maintaining their placement wherever possible to preserve continuity and stability.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Designated Teacher for Looked After Children**

In early years settings, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) fulfils this role.

Our designated person for LAC/PLAC is:

Karen Lockley (Manager and DSL)

Their responsibilities include:

- coordinating support for LAC/PLAC;
- ensuring staff receive guidance or training;
- liaising with the social worker, Virtual School, foster carer, and other professionals;
- ensuring the child's progress and needs are reviewed regularly;
- ensuring the child's voice is heard;
- ensuring all information is held securely.
- 6.2 Key Person
- Every LAC/PLAC child is allocated an experienced, attachment-aware key person before starting.

The key person:

- builds a trusting and emotionally sensitive relationship;
- provides consistent support, co-regulation and predictable responses;
- monitors well-being, learning, and behaviour;
- feeds into care planning and multi-agency reviews.

Multi-Agency Working and Care Planning

- **Initial Professionals' Meeting**

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Before or at the start of placement, the DSL will convene or attend a multi-agency meeting with:

- the child's social worker,
- foster carer,
- Virtual School (if required), and
- other relevant professionals.

A personalised Early Years Care & Education Plan (EYCEP) will be created.

This includes the child's:

- emotional needs
- attachment needs
- communication profile
- behaviour support strategies
- identity, culture, religion, and language
- strengths, interests, and learning priorities
- SEND or health needs
- safeguarding requirements
- contact arrangements with parents (including supervised contact, if applicable)
- arrangements for sharing information and setting expectations
- who receives reports and when
- photo permissions and data sharing agreements
- any early years PEP (Personal Education Plan) requirements.
- **Review Schedule**

The EYCEP is reviewed:

- after 2 weeks,
- after 6 weeks,
- after 3 months,
- and then every 3-6 months or as required by the social worker or Virtual School.

Settling-In and Daily Practice

- The settling-in process mirrors our standard procedure but may be longer or more flexible.
- The foster carer acts in the "parent role" unless the care plan states otherwise.
- Staff will closely monitor:
 - emotional regulation
 - relationships with staff and peers
 - attachment behaviours
 - behaviour triggers
 - well-being and safety
- Observations during the first two weeks will prioritise emotional well-being over academic progress.
- Staff will use trauma-sensitive approaches and avoid punitive responses.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Safeguarding Concerns

If concerns arise:

- about the child's welfare, staff follow our Child Protection procedures and inform the DSL.
- about the foster carer or placement, concerns are logged and shared with the child's social worker immediately.
- If there is immediate danger, staff will contact MASH / Children's Social Care in line with local procedures and inform the DSL.

All safeguarding records are stored securely and separately from the main education file.

Communication with Social Workers and Foster Carers

- Regular communication is essential.
- Planned meetings occur during reviews or earlier if concerns arise.
- All professionals involved will receive copies of relevant records, reports, or assessments as agreed in the care plan.

Transitions to School or New Provision

Transitions for LAC/PLAC children are handled with particular sensitivity.

The DSL and key person will:

- liaise with the receiving school's Designated Teacher;
- share relevant information (with social worker approval);
- support additional settling visits where necessary;
- ensure the child's needs and progress are fully documented.

Training and Staff Development

We ensure staff receive training or guidance in:

- trauma-informed practice;
- attachment theory and co-regulation;
- supporting LAC/PLAC in early years;
- multi-agency working;
- information sharing and confidentiality.

Training needs are reviewed annually as part of safeguarding CPD.

Policy Review

- This policy is reviewed annually or earlier if statutory guidance changes.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

- The DSL monitors the progress and well-being of all LAC/PLAC children as part of our safeguarding and SEND monitoring processes.
- Learning from audits, incidents, complaints, or multi-agency reviews will inform future updates.

Useful References

- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*
- *EYFS Statutory Framework (2024)*
- *Promoting the Education of Looked After Children (DfE)*
- Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP)
- Bromley Virtual School for Looked After Children
- *The Designated Teacher for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children (DfE)*