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**Child Protection Policy**

**Date: 15/08/24**

**Review Date: 15/08/25**

Introduction

At Stepping Stones Alternative Provision, we are committed to create a safe and nurturing environment for all of our students. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people under our care. This policy outlines our approach to ensuring safety and maintaining the highest standards of protection against any abuse or harm. This policy applies to all involved with Stepping Stones Alternative Provision, including employees, volunteers or any other individuals associated with Stepping Stones Alternative Provision.

Our guidelines to maintain the highest child protection standards possible are stated below:

Policy Statement

* Stepping Stones Alternative Provision recognises its legal and moral responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, abuse, and exploitation.
* We are dedicated to creating a safe and supportive environment where children and young people can thrive and reach their full potential.
* We believe that every child has the right to be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.
* We are committed to complying with all relevant child protection legislation, regulations, and guidelines.

Key Principles

* Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare: We are committed to actively promoting the welfare and well-being of all children and young people in our care.
* Preventing Harm: We aim to prevent harm by identifying and mitigating risks, maintaining robust procedures, and providing appropriate support.
* Child Centred approach: Our policies, procedures, and actions are guided by the best interests of the child or young person.
* Empowering and Listening: We encourage open communication and active participation of children and young people, enabling them to express their views and concerns.
* Confidentiality and Sharing of Information: Information will be handled confidentially and shared appropriately on a need-to-know basis, ensuring compliance with data protection laws and guidelines.

Roles and Responsibilities

* Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): At Stepping Stones Alternative Provision two staff members are DSL trained. Both members will offer support and guidance on incidents that may arise. They will also act as a point of contact for child protection concerns.
* Staff and Volunteers: All employees, volunteers, and contractors will receive appropriate training and guidance on child protection, recognising signs of abuse, and reporting procedures.
* Reporting Concerns: Anyone who suspects or receives information about abuse, neglect, or harm to a child or young person has a duty to report it to the DSL immediately.
* Supportive Environment: Stepping Stones Alternative Provision will foster a culture where concerns can be raised without fear of retribution and provide necessary support to those involved.

Procedures and Reporting

* Reporting Concerns: Any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child or young person should be reported to the DSL using the designated reporting channels (phone, email, in-person) as soon as possible.
* Record-Keeping: Accurate and confidential records of concerns, discussions, and actions taken will be maintained securely, adhering to data protection laws.
* Cooperation and Collaboration: The main priority for Stepping Stones Alternative Provision is to ensure all safeguarding matters are discussed with schools designated safeguarding leads and assist in the most appropriate way to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students. If deemed appropriate, we will collaborate with external agencies to provide the best support possible.
* Support and Referral: Appropriate support will be provided to children, young people, and their families, and referrals to external agencies will be made where necessary.
* Training and Awareness: Regular training and awareness programs will be conducted to ensure staff and volunteers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to safeguard children and young people. As a minimum standard, all staff will be provided safeguarding training on employment or at the beginning of each academic year.

Review and Monitoring

* Stepping Stones Alternative Provision will regularly review and update the Child Protection Policy to ensure it remains current and effective.
* Monitoring and Evaluation: The implementation of the policy will be monitored and evaluated to identify areas for improvement and ensure compliance with legal requirements and best practices. Any areas of improvement provided form external agencies or training providers will be considered and the approach at Stepping Stones Alternative Provision may be adapted to ensure the safest environment possible for all children and young people associated with Stepping Stones Alternative Provision.