

# How to Help Protect Yourself from Allegations of Abuse

All childcare professionals are at risk from allegations of abuse. As a childminder, you will often be working on your own, without any adult witnesses to your childminding practice. It is vital that you take every step possible to protect yourself and your family from allegations against you. Consistent good practice, observation and good record keeping are the key to protecting yourself.

Here are some practical steps which you can take, and incorporate in your practice from the beginning:

- Accident Records - always complete accident records, even for minor injuries and ask the parents/carers to sign the record on the same day. If another adult witnesses the accident, record their name and contact details and ask them to sign the entry.
- Incident Records - keep a record for any incident which does not result in injury. Make sure parents/carers sign this record on the same day.
- Record any concerns you may have about a child. Parents/carers should sign these records unless by doing so, this could be detrimental to the child.
- Existing Injuries Records - record any injury that that the child has when they arrive at your home. Make sure the parent signs the record on the same day.
- Attendance Register - keep registers up to date with arrival/departure times, to show when you actually have the child (this may be different from contracted hours).
- Medication Records - never give medication to a child without prior parents/carers' written permission, which clearly states the name of medicine, dosage and time of administration. Keep a record of when you administered this medication; include any reaction a child may have after taking the medication and if applicable when the last dosage was given by the parents/carers. Make sure the parents/carers sign this record on the same day.

- Remember to keep all your records and observations confidential and stored securely.
- Encourage children to be independent - do not carry out intimate tasks for children that they can do for themselves.
- Parents should be informed that touch and physical contact is essential in order to provide sensitive, high quality care and educational setting. Physical contact is necessary in the carrying out of staff professional duties e.g. cuddling a child who has hurt themselves, sitting together on the sofa reading a book, kissing a child when requested or holding a baby when feeding.
- Never rough-handle a child.
- Never smack, shake, hit, bite, threaten or humiliate a child.
- Do not use inappropriate language in front of children. They learn by copying the adults around them.
- Never force kisses or cuddles on a child who does not want to be kissed/cuddled.
- Gain written permission from parents/carers, as stated in your registration requirements.
- Never leave minded children unsupervised, this includes leaving children with any members of your family who are not registered. In extreme emergencies you can leave the children temporarily with another responsible adult. This should be agreed with parents/carers beforehand and it is good practice that they have met this responsible person and their agreement is in writing.
- Contact your Childminding Support Consultant, Local Authority Advisor or other support worker available to you if you need clarification on how best to protect yourself from allegations.

### **Points to consider if an allegation is made against you or a member of your family**

- All allegations and complaints have to be investigated
- You need to be aware of what to do if an allegation of child abuse is made against you, your family, an assistant or co-childminder.
- You must inform Ofsted on 0300 123 1231

- If there is an allegation about you, a member of your family or your co-childminder or assistant, you must refer the child involved to your Local Authority children's social care team or MASH team
- They will contact the Designated Officer (DO) regarding the allegation.
- It is also recommended that you contact the DO yourself to inform them of the allegation. Contact numbers for your DO should be available on your Local Safeguarding Children Board website or from your children's social care team.

**There is a duty to inform the DO within 1 working day of any allegations.**

**If an allegation of child abuse is made against you or your family, as well as informing Ofsted you should:**

- Inform your Public Liability Insurers - there may be insurance implications and they may have additional requirements for you to carry out.
- Seek legal advice from a solicitor or Law Centre. Find the number in Yellow Pages or ask your Citizens Advice Bureau for assistance. Some providers of public liability insurance offer a legal advice telephone service included with your insurance package.
- Keep records of all meetings, telephone calls and letters, both written and received.
- Inform your Childminding Support Consultant, Local Authority Advisor or other support worker available to you. They may be able to offer you support and guidance about the process.