



## **Alcohol, Drugs and Medication Policy**

At The Little Magpies Nursery, we are committed to providing a safe, healthy, and professional environment for all children, staff, and visitors. To safeguard the welfare of the children in our care, we have a zero-tolerance policy towards the misuse of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the unsafe use of medication by staff during working hours or when representing the nursery.

### **1. Alcohol and Illegal Substances**

The safety, wellbeing, and developmental needs of the children in our care are our highest priority. Staff must always be in a fit state to perform their duties and to provide high-quality care and supervision. The misuse of alcohol or illegal substances poses a serious risk to the health and safety of both children and staff and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

- Staff must **never attend work under the influence** of alcohol or illegal substances.
- The **consumption, possession, or sale** of alcohol or illegal drugs on nursery premises or while attending nursery duties (including outings and training) is strictly prohibited.
- Arriving at work smelling of alcohol or displaying signs of intoxication will lead to **immediate suspension** pending investigation.
- Any breach of this section will be treated as **gross misconduct** and may lead to **dismissal** and/or a **referral to external authorities** including the LADO, Gateshead Council, or the Police.

### **2. Prescribed and Over-the-Counter Medication**

We recognise that staff may occasionally need to take prescribed or over-the-counter medication during working hours. To maintain a safe and effective working environment, it is essential that any medication taken does not impair a staff member's ability to care for children or carry out their duties safely. All staff must take responsibility for managing their own health in a way that does not compromise the wellbeing of others.

- Staff must inform the **Nursery Manager or DSL** if they are taking medication that may cause side effects such as drowsiness or reduced alertness.

- Medications must be **stored safely and securely**, out of the reach of children, and must not be left unattended in bags or coats.
- Only medication that is **prescribed by a healthcare professional** for the named individual should be brought into the setting.
- Staff are required to **log any medication taken** in the **relevant medication file** to ensure accurate records are kept.
- If a member of staff is deemed **unfit for duty** due to the effects of medication, they will be asked to leave the premises, and appropriate cover will be arranged.

### **3. Staff Responsibility to Report Concerns**

We expect all staff to uphold the safety and wellbeing of the children and to take action if they are concerned about a colleague's fitness for work.

If a staff member suspects that another colleague is under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or misusing medication, they must:

- **Report their concern immediately and confidentially** to the Nursery Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If the concern is about the Manager or DSL, the report should be made to the **Deputy DSL** or directly to the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**.
- **Record factual observations** such as appearance, behaviour, odour, or actions that raised concern (e.g., slurred speech, unsteadiness, erratic behaviour, mood swings).
- **Never confront the individual directly** or make accusations. All concerns must be handled professionally and sensitively.
- Maintain **confidentiality** and allow the management team to investigate appropriately.
- If a child's safety is believed to be at **immediate risk**, staff must **act immediately** to remove the child from danger and notify the DSL without delay.

Staff are protected under the nursery's **Whistleblowing Policy** when raising a concern in good faith.

### **4. Management Response to Allegations or Concerns**

At The Little Magpies Nursery, we take any allegations or concerns regarding staff conduct or safeguarding very seriously. It is vital that any potential issues are addressed promptly and in accordance with our safeguarding policy to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care. This section outlines the procedures the management will follow in response to any allegations or concerns, ensuring that every situation is handled with care, professionalism, and respect for all parties involved.

When a concern is raised, the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- **Perform an initial risk assessment** and, if deemed necessary, remove the staff member from their duties immediately, pending further investigation.

- **Document all reported concerns, observations, and actions taken**, maintaining a full and accurate record.
- **Contact Gateshead LADO** if the concern involves the safety or well-being of children, following established safeguarding procedures.
- **Contact the Police** if illegal substances are suspected or found on the premises.
- **Hold a formal meeting** with the staff member in question, informing them of their right to be accompanied during the discussion.
- **Follow any necessary disciplinary procedures** in line with the Nursery's policies and the staff member's contract.

## 5. Support for Staff

We recognise that allegations or concerns regarding substance use or medication can be a challenging and sensitive issue for staff members involved. It is essential that all staff receive appropriate support during such situations to ensure their wellbeing and provide guidance throughout the process. The following measures are in place to support staff:

- **Confidentiality and Sensitivity:** We ensure that any concerns raised regarding a staff member's wellbeing or conduct are handled with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality, in line with our safeguarding and HR policies.
- **Access to Support Services:** Staff members involved in such matters will be informed of their right to seek support from external services, including counselling, where appropriate.
- **Regular Communication:** Throughout any investigation or concerns process, the Nursery Manager or DSL will maintain regular communication with the staff member involved, ensuring they feel supported and informed about the process.
- **Provision of a Support Person:** Should a staff member require emotional or practical support during an investigation, we will make reasonable efforts to provide access to a colleague, friend, or representative who can accompany them, where appropriate.
- **Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** Where applicable, and following the outcome of any investigations, we are committed to supporting the staff member's rehabilitation and reintegration into the team if they are found to be fit to return to their duties. This may involve additional training, supervision, or adjustments to working conditions.

We believe that offering clear support is key to ensuring staff feel respected and are empowered to resolve any issues constructively.

## 6. Relevant contacts

- **Gateshead LADO:** 0191 433 8011 / [lado@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:lado@gateshead.gov.uk)
- **Gateshead Children's Social Care:** 0191 433 2653
- **Ofsted:** 0300 123 1231
- **Police (emergency):** 999
- **Police (non-emergency):** 101

