

Parent /Carer Participation Policy

Statement of Purpose

We encourage and welcome all forms of parental involvement in the work and life of Torphins Playgroup. We recognise the added value and benefits that participation can bring to the setting and to parents and children. On occasion participation may take the form of volunteering to undertake a particular role within the Playgroup, either for the benefit of the setting or to provide the volunteer with experience in order to enhance their career prospects. A volunteer undertakes voluntary work through choice with no contract of employment and without expectation of financial remuneration. This will be made clear to all those wishing to volunteer. The following policy outlines Torphins Playgroup's commitment to parental participation and the use of volunteers and outlines how this will be fostered effectively.

Inclusion

We adhere to a policy of equal opportunities and as such will not discriminate against parental participation and volunteer activity on the basis of age, gender, disability, ethnicity or home language etc. We will endeavour to remove all barriers to participation by supporting parents and volunteers appropriately e.g. by ensuring disabled access, use of appropriate approaches to seek children's views etc.

Consideration will be given to meeting and appointment times for parents in order to accommodate work patterns and home circumstances. Information regarding participation opportunities, meeting times, parents' groups, parental updates etc. will be distributed in a variety of ways (e.g. newsletter, poster, word of mouth, social media) by the setting to ensure all parents have the same opportunities. In selecting parents for any activity (e.g. accompanying children on an outing) no favouritism will be displayed. Staff will be welcoming, encouraging and respectful towards parents at all times in order to maximise parental involvement.

Forms of Participation

Parental involvement in their child's learning and development

We acknowledge the parent's role as prime educator of the child and will encourage them to work closely with the Playgroup to promote the child's learning and development. Parents will be consulted formally on a regular basis about their child's progress and informally on a daily basis. They will be encouraged to spend time in the playroom with their child (where work and home circumstances permit). Parents will be kept fully informed regarding any planning for their child's learning and development and will be invited to contribute to this. Their permission will be sought as appropriate for any involvement with other agencies (e.g. speech therapy) and their presence at planning and review meetings encouraged.

Parental involvement may also include Committee activities such as parental representation in the development of policies, improvement plans and key decisions. It can include involvement in the life and work of the establishment, for instance through volunteering opportunities; keeping track of children's work and on-going, two-way communication between home and our early learning and childcare setting, and we will encourage parents and families to be involved in a collaborative way.

Influencing the work and life of the setting

Through membership of committees, participation in discussion forums and consultations via questionnaires and response slips we will invite parents to express their views and influence policies, programmes and practices within the Playgroup. We will also take cognisance of views expressed to staff by parents on a more informal basis.

Using personal and professional skills

We will welcome the contributions parents can bring to the setting through their personal or professional skills, knowledge and interests (e.g. running cookery classes, leading keep fit sessions, helping staff and children with computing skills etc.). Contributions of practical skills that enhance the setting's environment and promote a sense of community will also be encouraged and welcomed (e.g. gardening, sewing, painting etc.).

Developing personal skills

Staff within the Playgroup will seek to share their expertise in childcare with parents who wish to increase their own knowledge and skills. We will also respond to parents' interests where possible by providing groups/classes on a variety of topics (e.g. promoting positive behaviour, healthy meals, computing skills etc.). Where staffing ratios allow, we will encourage staff and parents to participate in learning activities together, sharing the learning.

Open door policy

Parents will be informed at enrolment that they can speak to staff at any time regarding their child. Should they wish to speak to the manager or a senior member of staff, every effort will be made to accommodate this request immediately or as soon as possible. Parents will be made aware that we welcome their suggestions, treat their concerns seriously and are willing to advise them where we can or signpost to other services. Should a parent wish to make a complaint they should speak in the first instance to the manager but will also be made aware that they have the right to approach the Care Inspectorate if they are unhappy with the outcome. They will also be informed that they are entitled to take complaints directly to the Care Inspectorate in the first instance. Staff should be alert to any signs of dissatisfaction with the service that parents may express to them informally and feed this back to the manager.

Volunteers

On occasion parents or other members of the community may wish to take up a more regular or formal role within the Playgroup (e.g. a parent may come into the setting on a weekly basis to help in the creative area or read stories to the children; requests may be made to accommodate work experience students etc.). These roles will be clearly defined for the volunteers, with expectations set out at the onset and appropriate support and guidance provided. In the case of regular volunteering, a role descriptor may be deemed appropriate.

Volunteers from outwith the setting will be carefully screened and vetted. Volunteers will never be left on their own with children.

(Please note - since volunteers are not employees and will not be left on their own with children, they should not be required to complete a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme disclosure. If, however, a person is volunteering within the setting regularly e.g. on a weekly basis, a PVG disclosure will be sought.) All volunteers will be made aware of key policies within the setting especially Health and Safety, Child Protection, Confidentiality and Infection Control, and will be required to adhere to them.

Confidentiality

Parents and other volunteers participating in work or activities within the Playgroup will be made aware of the importance of confidentiality and the requirement not to discuss or comment on children other than their own. They will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Staff too must be aware of their own conversations and actions while working with parents/volunteers. They should also be sensitive to any information disclosed by a parent while working alongside them which may be given in confidence.

Monitoring of this Policy

It will be the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that all staff, including new or temporary staff, are familiar with this policy and to monitor that it is being implemented. This will be achieved through both formal and informal observation of staff practice and review of records of membership/attendance at organised activities/events. Levels of parental response to questionnaires, feedback forms etc. will also be monitored.

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