



Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

1.3 Looked-After Children

Policy statement

Impact Montessori is committed to providing high-quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. We recognise that looked-after children may have experienced significant changes, loss, separation or disruption in their lives and may require additional support to feel safe, secure and able to learn.

All staff are committed to providing a nurturing, inclusive and consistent environment in which looked-after children are listened to, valued and supported to develop positive relationships, confidence, resilience and a strong sense of belonging.

A looked-after child is a child who is in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by a local authority under the relevant provisions of the Children Act 1989. Children may live with foster carers, relatives or other connected carers, in residential settings or, in some circumstances, with their birth family. Where a child is accommodated under a voluntary arrangement, the local authority does not automatically have parental responsibility; the arrangements and decision-making responsibilities must therefore be established for each child. GOV.UK+1

We recognise that children enter care for a range of reasons. We do not make assumptions that a looked-after child has experienced abuse or neglect. However, we recognise that separation from familiar people, environments and routines can affect a child's emotional well-being, relationships, behaviour and ability to engage in learning.

Our practice is informed by the importance of secure relationships, attachment, emotional well-being and resilience. We aim to provide each child with consistent adults, predictable routines and sensitive support that takes account of their individual experiences, needs, identity and care arrangements.

The child's safety, welfare, development and best interests are central to all decisions concerning their placement.

Principles

- We treat every looked-after child as an individual and do not use their looked-after status to label or define them.
- We use the term looked-after child where it is necessary to describe the child's legal status. We do not use acronyms such as "LAC" when speaking to or about children.

- We recognise that children in care have different experiences and needs. We do not make assumptions about their history, family circumstances, attachment or behaviour.
- We will consider applications for looked-after children in accordance with our admissions arrangements, available places and the child's individual needs. We will not automatically refuse a place because a child is looked after or because of their age.
- We will work with the child's social worker, foster carer or other person with care of the child, the Virtual School and other relevant professionals to determine whether the setting can appropriately meet the child's needs.
- Where a child is particularly unsettled following a change in care placement, we will work with the relevant professionals and carers to agree an appropriate settling-in and attendance plan. This will be based on the child's individual needs rather than a fixed minimum period of time spent with a carer.
- Where appropriate, we may offer flexible settling-in arrangements, including gradual increases in attendance, additional visits or opportunities for the child's carer to remain nearby, where this is consistent with the child's care arrangements and the setting's ability to provide safe and effective care.
- Where a child who already attends Impact Montessori becomes looked after, we will seek to maintain continuity of education and care wherever this is in the child's best interests and can be safely supported.
- We recognise the importance of the child's identity, culture, language, religion or belief, family relationships and personal history and will ensure these are respected and reflected appropriately in our practice.
- We ensure that the child's views, wishes and feelings are considered in an age- and developmentally appropriate way.
- We provide opportunities for looked-after children to develop positive relationships with their key person and other trusted adults.
- We will make reasonable adjustments and provide additional support where a looked-after child has identified special educational needs, disabilities or other additional needs.
- We will work with the child's local authority and other relevant professionals to support the child's educational progress and development.

Procedures

Designated person

- The manager will identify a designated person or lead practitioner within the setting to coordinate support for looked-after children.
- The designated person will work closely with the child's key person and other relevant staff to ensure that the child's individual needs are understood and appropriately supported.
- Staff will receive appropriate information and support to enable them to understand the child's needs while maintaining confidentiality and respecting the child's privacy.

Information about the child

Before or as soon as practicable after a looked-after child starts at the setting, we will seek relevant information from the child's social worker, foster carer or other authorised person and, where appropriate, other professionals.

Information may include:

- the child's legal and care status;
- the child's current care arrangements;
- who has parental responsibility;
- who is authorised to make day-to-day decisions for the child;
- the child's social worker and other relevant professional contacts;
- the child's health, development and additional needs;
- known triggers, anxieties or experiences that may affect the child's well-being;
- arrangements for contact with parents, relatives or other significant people;
- information relevant to safeguarding;
- the child's routines, interests, strengths and preferences;
- arrangements for education and the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP), where applicable; and
- any relevant restrictions or court orders concerning information, contact or collection arrangements.

We will only request, record, share and retain information that is relevant and necessary for the child's care, education and safeguarding.

Care planning and professional working

- We recognise that the local authority has statutory responsibilities towards children who are looked after and that the child's care plan provides the framework for their care and support. GOV.UK+1
- We will contribute relevant information to the child's care planning and review processes when requested and appropriate.
- We will work cooperatively with social workers, foster carers, the Virtual School, health professionals, SEND professionals and other relevant agencies.
- We will attend relevant meetings where our contribution would support the child's welfare, learning, development or safeguarding.
- We will not create a separate care plan that duplicates the local authority's statutory care plan. Where appropriate, we will maintain an individual support or settling-in plan within the setting that complements the child's care plan and PEP.
- Any concerns about the child's welfare or safeguarding will be dealt with immediately under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will not be delayed until a scheduled review meeting.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

- We recognise that a Personal Education Plan forms part of the statutory care planning arrangements for looked-after children and is an important tool for supporting their education and development. PEP arrangements apply to children in early years provision as well as school-aged children. Suffolk County Council+2
- We will contribute relevant information to the child's PEP and attend PEP meetings where appropriate.
- Information provided may include the child's learning and development, strengths, interests, attendance, progress, identified barriers to learning and any support or interventions that may be beneficial.
- We will ensure that the child's voice is considered, according to their age and understanding, and that the views of their carer and other relevant professionals are appropriately included.
- Where the child is eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), we will work with the local authority and relevant professionals to identify how funding can support the child's individual educational and developmental needs and agreed PEP outcomes. GOV.UK Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Impact Montessori recognises the importance of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) in supporting the education, learning, development and well-being of looked-after children. The PEP forms part of the child's overall care planning arrangements and should reflect the child's individual strengths, needs, interests, wishes and educational aspirations.
- We will work in partnership with the child's social worker, Virtual School, foster carer or other authorised carer and relevant professionals to contribute to the child's PEP.
- We will provide relevant information for the PEP, including information about the child's:
 - learning and development;
 - strengths, interests and achievements;
 - communication and language development;
 - personal, social and emotional development;
 - attendance and engagement;
 - relationships and interactions;
 - identified barriers to learning;
 - additional needs or SEND;
 - progress towards agreed outcomes; and
 - support or interventions that may help them make progress.
- The child's wishes and feelings will be considered in an age- and developmentally appropriate way when contributing to the PEP.

- Where appropriate, the child's foster carer, parent or other person with parental responsibility will be involved in discussions about the child's education and development, in accordance with the child's care arrangements and any relevant court orders.
- The child's key person and the designated person for looked-after children will contribute relevant observations and information to PEP meetings or reviews.
- We will work with the Virtual School and local authority to identify appropriate educational priorities and support, including making effective use of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) where the child is eligible.
- Where EYPP is available, we will use the funding to support the child's individual educational and developmental needs and agreed outcomes rather than treating it as general funding.
- We will monitor the child's progress against agreed PEP outcomes and provide relevant updates to the child's social worker, Virtual School and other professionals involved in the child's education.
- We will ensure that any agreed actions arising from the PEP that are the responsibility of the setting are incorporated into the child's day-to-day provision and reviewed for effectiveness.
- We will maintain appropriate records of our contribution to the PEP and ensure that information is stored securely and shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know.
- Where a child's circumstances change, including a change of placement, school or identified need, we will provide updated information for the PEP and participate in further planning where appropriate.
- The PEP will complement, rather than replace, the child's statutory care plan and any other relevant plans, including an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where applicable.
- We will work with all relevant professionals to support continuity of education and care, particularly during transitions between settings or when there is a change in the child's care placement.

Key person and settling in

- Every child will be allocated a key person in accordance with the EYFS requirements.
- The key person will work with the child's carer and relevant professionals to establish a consistent and predictable approach.
- We recognise that a looked-after child may need additional time, reassurance or flexibility when settling into the setting.
- The settling-in process will be individually planned and reviewed according to the child's responses and needs.
- We will provide a consistent approach to routines, transitions and expectations wherever possible.
- Staff will observe the child's emotional well-being, interactions, communication, play, behaviour and engagement in learning.

- We will use these observations to build an understanding of the whole child and to identify appropriate support.
- We will celebrate the child's strengths, interests, achievements and progress and avoid defining the child by their care status or previous experiences.

Working with foster carers, parents and family members

- We recognise the important role played by foster carers and other people who provide day-to-day care.
- We will maintain respectful and professional relationships with the child's foster carer or other authorised carer.
- We will establish who is authorised to receive information, give consent and make decisions about the child, taking account of parental responsibility, court orders and the child's care arrangements.
- We will not assume that a foster carer has parental responsibility simply because they provide the child's day-to-day care.
- Where a child is accommodated voluntarily and a birth parent retains parental responsibility, we will respect the parent's legal rights while also following any agreed arrangements or restrictions put in place by the local authority or court.
- Arrangements concerning contact with birth parents, relatives or other significant people will be followed in accordance with the child's care plan, court orders and instructions from the appropriate professionals.
- The setting will not independently arrange, change or supervise family contact unless this has been specifically agreed and is within the setting's role, competence, safeguarding arrangements and insurance cover.
- We will seek to maintain appropriate links with important people in the child's life where this is consistent with the child's welfare and agreed care arrangements.

Safeguarding

- Looked-after children may have additional vulnerabilities, but their looked-after status does not in itself mean that abuse or neglect has occurred.
- Staff will remain alert to signs that a child may need help, support or protection and will follow the setting's safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- Any concern about a child's treatment by a foster carer, parent, family member, staff member or another person will be reported immediately in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.
- Where a concern relates to a member of staff or another adult working at the setting, the setting's allegations against staff procedure will be followed.
- We will share safeguarding information promptly with the appropriate agencies where this is necessary to protect the child.

- Information sharing will be lawful, proportionate, necessary and timely. Current safeguarding guidance places particular emphasis on effective multi-agency information sharing and coordinated support for looked-after children. GOV.UK+1

Confidentiality and record keeping

- Records concerning looked-after children will be kept securely and handled in accordance with our confidentiality, data protection, safeguarding and record-keeping procedures.
- Information will only be shared with people who have a legitimate need to know, unless there is a safeguarding or other lawful reason for wider disclosure.
- Staff will not discuss a child's care status or personal circumstances with other parents, children or unauthorised people.
- We will ensure that information provided to staff is sufficient to safeguard and support the child while avoiding unnecessary disclosure of sensitive personal information.

Transitions

- Transitions between rooms, settings and schools will be planned sensitively and in partnership with the child's carer, social worker and receiving setting, as appropriate.
- Relevant information will be shared securely and lawfully to support continuity of care, learning and development.
- The child's PEP and other relevant plans will be considered when planning educational transitions.
- We will support the child to understand and manage transitions in a way that reflects their age, understanding and individual needs.
- We will not assume that a birth parent's consent is required for every educational decision. The setting will establish who has parental responsibility and who has authority to make the relevant decision, and will follow the child's care plan, court orders and advice from the local authority.

Review and monitoring

- The manager and designated person will monitor the effectiveness of support provided to looked-after children.
- Plans and arrangements will be reviewed whenever there is a significant change in the child's circumstances, including a change of placement, social worker, care arrangement, identified need or safeguarding concern.
- We will respond promptly to recommendations made through the child's care plan, PEP, professional meetings or other relevant assessments.
- We will work with the child's carers and professionals to promote positive outcomes in learning, development, emotional well-being and relationships.

Further guidance

This policy should be read alongside:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Children Act 1989: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review.
- Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People.
- Impact Montessori Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Impact Montessori Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Impact Montessori Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy.
- Impact Montessori Confidentiality, Data Protection and Record Keeping procedures.

The EYFS statutory framework was updated and came into force on 1 September 2026, and the current safeguarding framework should be reflected in the setting's policies and procedures. GOV.UK+1

Policy approval

This policy was adopted by: Impact Montessori

On: _____

Date to be reviewed: _____

Signed on behalf of the provider: _____

Name of signatory: _____

Role of signatory: _____