

SHIRLEY CHILDRENS CENTRE PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY POLICY

This policy links with the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- Complaints
- Volunteering
- Confidentiality policy and guidelines
- Family trips and off-site activities
- Learning, play and play equipment
- Publicity and marketing

Document Control

Amendment History

Version/Issue Number	Date	Author	Remarks/Reason for change	Review Date
1	October 2014	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	To be ratified by the governing body	October 2015
2	October 2015	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2016
3	October 2016	Eyullahemaye Henry-Miller	Review	October 2017
4	October 2017	Yvonne Charalambous	Review	October 2018
5	October 2018	Nicky Cook & Katie Coomber	Review	October 2019

Partnership with Parents and the Local Community Policy

1. Statement of intent/policy statement

Shirley Children's Centre recognises that the community is a great resource and support for the centre, and seeks to build on its skills, knowledge and ability. In doing so, the centre values the skills and knowledge that parents can offer in enriching the lives of local families and by contributing to direct the work of the centre.

2. Aim/purpose

Shirley Children's Centre will:

- Welcome any input from parents/carers or any member of the community, whether it is positive or negative, regarding the centre and its service provision
- Encourage a partnership with families in promoting a culture of cooperation between parents/carers and their children, the Children's Centre, the Croydon Council and others, e.g. relevant local private, voluntary and/or independent bodies in the community
- Recognise the skills, capacity, confidence and knowledge that lay within each individual
- Develop ways of working with families that is based on mutual trust, cooperation and respect
- Enable each individual to reach his/her potential and celebrate that success
- Build the self-confidence and self-esteem of all those who use the centre's services
- Foster a mutual spirit of peer support, confidence and belief in each other
- Encourage and support any parent/carer who wishes to join either the parents' forum or the Advisory Board
- Communicate effectively with children, parents/ carers and other partner agencies
- Promote anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice in all aspects of the centre's work
- Involve all members of the community regardless of their age, colour, culture, religion, sexual orientation, or disability
- Provide good quality education and play in a warm and child friendly atmosphere
- Act as positive role models for the community to observe

3. Scope

This policy applies to everyone at the centre including staff, volunteers, families and visitors. 'Staff' includes both those employed by Croydon Council as well as those from other who provide services for the centre, as part of the multi-agency framework delivering the Every Child Matters change for children agenda. This also applies to staff from the statutory and non-statutory sector; the latter includes private, voluntary and independent groups.

4. Legal context

This policy is covered by:

- The Early Years Foundation Stage Principles 2007 & 2018: **Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments**
- Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006
- Best Start Children's Centre Practice Guidance 2005 & 2006
- Governance Guidance for Best Start Children's Centres and extended schools 2007
- The Childcare Act 2006
- The Children Acts 1998 & 2004, Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Every Child Matters 2004; Outcome: **Make a positive contribution**
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Gender Equality Act 2007
- The Duty to Promote Community Cohesion 2007
- The Disability Equality Duty 2006
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Every Child Matters: change for children 2004. Outcomes: **Be healthy, Stay safe, Enjoy and achieve**

5. Mandatory systems and procedures

- Any information regarding events (e.g. parent forums and open days) and/or changes affecting the centre will be clearly displayed on notice boards and in appropriate languages where possible
- Parents are encouraged to attend the parents' forum, where they can share any concerns, compliments or other views. They are also encouraged to join the Children's Centre Advisory Board to become involved in decision-making about the centre. If necessary parents/ carers may be given a 'buddy' to help them in this role if needed. This can be arranged by a staff member
- Parents are invited to complete an annual questionnaire. This can provide valuable feedback on how to improve the centre's services and on the quality of service provision
- All staff will promote a climate of openness and dialogue with families and are available to speak to parents on a daily basis when they attend sessions with their child/ren
- There is a clear complaints policy and procedure available to any parent/carer. If appropriate, a neutral person acting as a third party can assist the parent/carer in making a complaint against the centre
- A private room can be used if a parent/carer needs a confidential place to discuss concerns and issues
- All information for parents will be presented in an appropriate manner
- Any information disclosed to staff from parents/carers can only be shared with parental consent, unless it is in relation to Child Protection/safeguarding children
- All children/ family records written by staff are based purely on fact
- Children's records are stored in a lockable/ secure filing cabinet on the premises
- All records are updated on a regular basis

- All centre policies are reviewed in line with the children's centre policy review cycle
- Parents/carers can ask a senior manager for access to their child's records at any time. The staff member will provide the family with the records, and if needed a private room to discuss the contents
- The centre will provide a comfortable environment which will always be appropriate to the activity
- When parents/carers are new to a group, staff will always make the effort to provide the relevant introductions to other families
- A buddy system can be used in family groups to promote peer support
- The Children's Centre Manager will hold a separate budget, specially designated for expenses incurred during parents involvement in planning centre activities

Parents' Forums – Parent Voice

In addition to the termly Children's Centre Advisory Board, the Children's Centre Manager or another delegated staff member will arrange a regular and informal parents' forum:

- This will allow topics to be discussed that relate more to operational issues, though some topics may be taken forward to the larger, and more strategic, Children's Centre Advisory Board
- It is acceptable for parents/ carers to sit on both groups, though the parents' forum may be a suitable route for parents/ carers to progress through to the Children's Centre Advisory Board
- The parents' forum is best chaired by a parent/ carer, though with close support from a staff member if needed
- A record of the meeting is kept and notes distributed to those who attend
- A member of staff will always attend this meeting and feed back any urgent issues to the centre manager
- Childcare will be arranged (either provided in the centre or purchased from a registered provider) to enable parents/carers to participate fully in some meetings as appropriate

Guidelines for running parent/carer friendly meetings

The following guidance will promote good practice in order to promote the full participation of parents/carers:

- Agendas will be easily understood and kept short
- Meetings will not exceed two hours in length to comply with non-registered crèche provision
- A break will be scheduled mid-way through the meeting
- The language should be kept clear and concise without an overuse of jargon. Consideration will be made for basic skills, and the assumption avoided that everyone can read and write
- Professionals /staff members should avoid sitting next to each other so that parents/carers do not feel alienated or uncomfortable
- To start a meeting ice-breaker exercises can be used to settle new members into the group

- During introductions, staff members should only give a brief description of their role; parents/carers can feel intimidated by lengthy accounts of professional job duties
- It is agreed that everyone in the group is equal and that there is no natural hierarchy. Ground rules should be established at the first Parents' Forum Meeting
- Everyone should be given the opportunity to contribute and all views are made to feel valued
- Decision-making is by group consensus and should involve everyone. In certain cases, group members may need time to decide on a matter, and it is acceptable to defer a decision to a subsequent meeting

What children and parents/carers need in order to participate fully

The following considerations should be made wherever possible:

- Good quality childcare; the children's needs must be given full priority
- A break/time-out during the session/meeting
- Recognising the balance that parents have between caring for a family and other interests/responsibilities
- Parents/carers may need personal support during difficult times
- Social/fun events are useful alongside more formal meetings
- Parents must feel that their ideas are respected and where appropriate their views are acted upon
- For parents/carers their home life/family responsibilities must be a priority over any voluntary duties
- Parents/carers need a minimum of seven days notice for meetings
- Paperwork for meetings should be sent out in advance of meetings wherever possible
- Refreshments should be provided
- All legitimate volunteer expenses (i.e. transport and childcare) should be reimbursed where appropriate

6. Implementation, methods

Information

- This policy will be promoted in all relevant publicity for the centre and also in any contracts that may be used with families

Involvement/Consultation

All Children's Centre staff will aim to:

- Talk informally about a child's progress and development
- Provide regular newsletters/publicity about the centre's activities
- Display current news and information
- Undertake home visits if appropriate, to discuss anything sensitive about a family
- Listen to the views of parents/carers and children
- Share any concerns about children with parents/ carers as soon as possible (and within the guidance of Child Protection and Safeguarding Children)

- Invite parents/carers to transfer meetings when children are about to start school
- Organise workshops/ family sessions to inform parents/carers about what their children are learning, and how families can support their learning
- Share children's records and other documentation with parents/carers
- Signpost families to other relevant services/agencies
- Invite opinions and ideas from families about the services they use
- Consult with families to assess the need for proposed new services. This may be through questionnaires, group discussions or with an anonymous suggestions box
- Ask for feedback at the end of a session or course; this may be a written and anonymous evaluation form, or informal group discussion
- Provide a 'comments box' for any questions, concerns, compliments or ideas. This will be in an accessible location
- Encourage voluntary participation from parents/ carers and other community members
- Enable parents/ carers to participate in charity fund raising activities and other social events

Self evaluation form (SEF) and annual conversation

This will be monitored on an annual basis with the Advisory Board.

7. Monitoring and reviewing

- It is the responsibility of the Children's Centre Manager to monitor and review the effectiveness of all policies relating to the centre
- The Children's Centre Manager will review and update this policy in line with the children's centre policy review cycle
- The Children's Centre Manager will update and amend this policy in line with any emerging government legislation or Croydon Council guidance

8. For further information please contact:

Nicky Cook & Katie Coomber
Interim Universal Services Coordinator
Shirley Children's Centre
34 Lilac Gardens
Shirley
Croydon
CR0 8RN

Tel: 020 8777 2119

Email: info@shirleychildrenscentre.org.uk

It is intended that by adopting this policy and keeping staff, volunteers, families and the management committee informed/trained and up-to-date with procedures, the centre can avoid the need for complaints.

However, the Children's Centre Manager is the first point of contact should any queries arise over this policy and its related procedures.



October 2018

9. Policy endorsement

This policy is agreed and signed by the governing body of Forest Academy School