

Crescent Nurseries

05 – HOME VISITS POLICY

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1.0	Dec25 New policy "HOME VISITS POLICY"	Hannah MacGuire

Persons responsible

- Director – Faheem Chishti
- Fozia Shah – Senior Nursery Manager

Statement of Intent

At Crescent Nurseries, we are committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and consistent development of every child. Regular attendance is essential for children to benefit from the experiences we offer. This policy is designed to protect the safety of all nursery staff carrying out home visits and detailing procedures for making home visits. It is also designed to ensure the safety of children who are not in regular attendance at their nursery. Where home visits take place, a risk assessment should be completed in advance. This will identify any concerns about potential risks and appropriate measures to be taken. If specific information is known about families, this should be added to the risk assessment. EYFS home visits will always take place with staff in pairs. Home visits can only take place when the policy and protocols are fully met.

Related Policies: Safeguarding Policy and Attendance Policy

Why We Might Conduct a Home Visit

A common finding of safeguarding case reviews is that practitioners don't understand the child's world and don't demonstrate professional curiosity. A home visit is a great opportunity to do this. If you have concerns about a child, there may be times when it is necessary to visit the home even if this is not part of your everyday practice (for example, nursery practitioners).

Specific Protocols for All Home Visits Risk Assessment

1. Review records to determine what is already known about the child and their family, and any other available information.
2. Talk to other professionals who may already have had contact or involvement with the family.
3. Obtain information about the location of the home visit. For example, does the area have a reputation for being unsafe, isolated or poorly lit?
4. Discuss strategies to adopt when working with a potentially challenging Parent/Carer/Family.
5. Where potential risks are identified, arrange an alternative meeting environment.

Before Visiting a Child's Home

Be clear and open with the family about your reason for visiting.

1. Decide whether this will be a planned or an unannounced visit. Consider the best day and time to go, for example, if you want the child to be present, or if you want to observe something specific, like a mealtime.
2. Complete a Risk Assessment for Home Visits.
3. Make appointments in advance and offer alternative dates/times if it is a planned visit.
4. If personal safety is a concern, go with a colleague or visit with another agency. In these circumstances, assess the safety for the child.
5. Confirm parents/carers' names and titles and keep on record. Do not presume that there are two parents with the same surname as the child.
6. Do not assume that all parents/carers are literate or fluent in English.

7. Make sure you consider diversity: social, cultural, racial, religious and sexual orientation.
8. Familiarise yourself with the location of the home and the route you will take before you leave.
9. Leave details of your visiting schedule with another member of staff in the nursery.
10. Ensure you have a charged mobile phone and keep it switched on during your visit.

During The Visit

1. Wear Uniform/Lanyard/Name badge that informs the parent/carer who you are.
2. Show respect for parents/carers as equal partners in the safeguarding process.
3. Listen carefully and attentively to both the parents/carers and the child.
4. Be aware of other adults, children and pets who may be in the home.
5. Sit near a door or exit, and if you feel uneasy or worried at any time, make an excuse and leave.
6. Staff should avoid commenting on a child's home or provision so that parents do not feel that any judgment is being made on their home or lifestyle.
7. Staff should demonstrate an awareness and respect for differing cultures.
8. Staff should comply with appropriate customs, such as removing shoes, wearing modest clothing, etc.
9. Staff should remain aware of time constraints for both parents/carers and themselves.
10. Maintain professional boundaries in your relationship with the family, e.g. do not drink alcohol or vape/smoke with them and don't accept gifts of any kind.
11. Consider confidentiality at all times. Do not engage in conversations about other families attending the nursery that the family is in contact with. Do not discuss anything in front of other family members without checking beforehand or privately that it is ok to do so.

What Should Staff Look for During a Home Visit

Record who lives in the home and their relationship to the child. Note if anyone else is present. See where the child sleeps, eats, washes, and plays, if possible – this can tell us a lot about their lived experience. In some cases, the living areas of the home were clean and tidy, but the child's bedroom was in very poor condition. Asking open, non-judgmental questions is best. Use all your senses, such as what you can smell, to give you clues about the home environment. Observe the child's interactions with their family. If the home is untidy or unclean, consider whether this is likely to cause harm to the child. Also consider efforts made by the family to make the best of their circumstances, particularly if they are living in temporary accommodation.

Health and Safety

1. Inform a nominated member of staff when you are leaving for a home visit.
2. Leave the details of the home visit schedule with a senior member of staff. Include a list of visit addresses and times, including family name, child's name, address, telephone number, purpose of visit, and time due back at the nursery.
3. You must inform the Senior Manager if there is a cancellation or alteration to the time.
4. Carry with you and show the parent/carer some form of identification.
5. Demonstrate normal courtesy – wait to be invited into the home.
6. If a child answers the door, ask if an adult is present in the house before entering. Do not enter if an adult is not present.
7. If the Parent/Carer appears at all uncomfortable about the visit continuing, staff should offer to leave, offer to continue the contact with a telephone call and give the Parent/Carer the telephone number of the nursery.
8. Use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels dangerous or threatening – leave, saying for example that you need to get something from your car.
9. All Home Visits must finish by 16.00.

Encountering Aggressive Behaviour During a Home Visit

- Never enter a house if there are raised voices or signs of aggression coming from within – call the police.
- Don't enter a home with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Don't enter a home with someone who is inappropriately dressed.
- If an aggressive incident occurs, remember to remain as calm as possible and speak slowly and calmly.
- Stay in communal and neutral rooms, such as a living room; avoid moving into bedrooms or kitchens.
- Keep space between yourself and the aggressor and try to keep a barrier (e.g. a table) between you where possible.

- Slowly move towards an exit, or to a room you can barricade yourself in.
- Try not to walk backwards as you risk tripping over.
- At the earliest opportunity, call the Police and call the Senior Manager to report the incident.

After the Visit

1. Contact the Senior Manager immediately after the visit is finished, informing them that you are safe. The Senior Manager must advise the Managing Director if staff carrying out a home visit have not made contact by the appointed time, and locally agreed actions must be followed, e.g. contacting the police to report a concern for welfare.
2. Ensure you have physically seen the child. If the child is not available to be physically seen, a follow-up home visit must be arranged.
3. Document your visit and findings using the Neglect Screening Toolkit or other appropriate recording form, including family strengths, opportunities, vulnerabilities and risks identified.
4. Refer to additional resources through Rochdale Borough Council's Children's Services Portal or Lancashire's Children's Services Support Hub and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
5. Discuss next steps with the Senior Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead and follow up on any safeguarding or child protection concerns.
6. Share information with appropriate agencies.

If Staff Cannot Gain Access to the Child's Home

- Post a "Sorry We Missed You" notecard at the relevant address. Make sure to complete these and include the relevant contact number for your setting.
- If you have safeguarding concerns and are unable to access the home, discuss with the Senior Manager and talk to other professionals involved. Record agreed actions of discussions and review the outcome. Escalate your concerns to the Local Authority via the Nursery's Designated Safeguarding Lead.