

**Mental health and well-being policy**

**Our Aim:**

To protect and promote the mental health and well-being of every individual at Fowlmere Playgroup including our staff, children and their families. By ensuring we as a setting have a culture of openness we are helping to reduce the stigma around mental health and create an environment that provides everyone a chance to talk and share how they are feeling without judgement. Fowlmere Playgroup aims to provide strong role models for positive mental health and well- being by being aware of factors that can impact an individual’s emotional health, how this can be overcome and further support that is available from services or charitable organisations. Fowlmere Playgroup has appointed a well- being champion who is responsible for understanding factors that may impact negatively upon mental health, is able to identify these quickly to prevent emotional health from diminishing and confidently uses a range of activities and support strategies to help the individual/family concerned.

**Fowlmere Playgroup’s Well- being Champion is Jasmine Redrup**

**Mental health and Well-being:**

The world health organisation states "Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."

1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives, and around 1 in 10 children experience mental health problems.

A person’s well-being and our mental health links to their behaviour and relates to our basic needs as human beings. These are…

* Physical needs (need to eat, drink, move & sleep)
* The need for affection, warmth & tenderness (being hugged, receiving & giving love & emotional warmth)
* The need for safety, clarity & continuity (knowing the rules, being able to predict what comes next, counting on others)
* The need for recognition & affirmation (feeling accepted & appreciated by others, being part of a group & having a sense of belonging)
* The need to feel capable (feeling that you are good at something, to experience success)

Generally, we all have days where we feel good and days when we don’t. However, a person with a mental health or emotional wellbeing problem will have more bad days than good.

There is no physical test or scan that reliably indicates whether a person has developed a mental illness. However, people should look out for the following as possible signs of a mental health disorder:

• withdrawing from friends, family, and colleagues

• avoiding activities that they would normally enjoy

• sleeping too much or too little

• eating too much or too little

• feeling hopeless

• having consistently low energy

• using mood-altering substances, including alcohol and nicotine, more frequently

• displaying negative emotions

• Being confused

• being unable to complete daily tasks, such as getting to work or cooking a meal

• having persistent thoughts or memories that reappear regularly

• thinking of causing physical harm to themselves or others

• hearing voices

• experiencing delusions

**Roles and responsibilities of well-being champion to staff of Fowlmere Playgroup:**

The settings well- being champion understands the importance of promoting and protecting the mental health and well- being of all working at Fowlmere Playgroup as this links directly to staff members physical health, social wellbeing and productivity contributing the general running and effectiveness of the setting in providing good quality early years provision and care. With the support of the well-being champion and being able to quickly identify factors and how these may influence the environment and atmosphere we provide for children and their families. By supporting staff and ensuring they have positive or improved mental health/well-being this will benefit the setting as a whole including the children we care for and the support we provide to them and their families.

**Happy well cared for staff = Happy children**

Other responsibilities include:

• Ensure all staff have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job. This include termly supervisions that touch directly upon individual’s well-being.

• Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism.

• Establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change such as changes in Fowlmere Playgroup’s committee.

• Give new employees a comprehensive induction programme providing an understanding of the organisation, the established policies and procedures, and the role they are expected to carry out.

• Ensure staff are provided with the resources and training required to carry out their job and are given opportunities for meaningful professional development.

•Deal sympathetically with staff suffering from mental health problems due to circumstances outside the workplace, and who consequently find it difficult to do their jobs properly. This includes support for staff returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems and creating a graduated return to work plan. All matters discussed are confidential and will only be shared on a need to know basis once consent has been obtained.

• Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently and are not made to feel guilty about their problems and are encouraged to seek further professional help if needed such as their GP or are provided with information on charity’s/organisations that may be able to help.

**•** Monitor the workplace, identify hazards and risks and take steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is reasonably practicable. To investigate the contribution of working conditions and other organisational factors to mental ill health and remedy this where possible.

• Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking, and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement. This includes monitoring staffs workloads.

**Strategies in place to support staff of Fowlmere Playgroup well-being and mental health:**

*Listen, communicate, working as a team, value, empowerment, appreciation and extra help.*

* Termly supervisions to discuss individual well-being, mental health and personal life factors such as stress. Time and effort spent to build relationships with others. (Listen)
* Well-being champion always on site and available to talk and support in different situations (communicate)
* Termly staff meetings to discuss feedback, input ideas and changes that need to be made in line with early years curriculum and requirements. (working as a team)
* Staff are given a paid allowance each month (30 mins per each key child) to keep children’s learning journals up to date, overtime pay and fuel costs covered when attending training outside of working hours to support professional development opportunities (value)
* Confidence in completing assessments and providing better outcomes for children in helping them reach next steps to their learning and development in a way that is appropriate to them by sharing ideas/activities/feedback from training attended to input in daily planning and provision. (empowerment)
* Praise, treats and thankyou presents to recognise the hard work staff put in each term to help settle children and how effective the key worker relationships they have built benefit children in reaching their full potential. (appreciation )
* Around the setting there are displays of posters outlining support that can be obtained if members of staff feel they are unable to talk about this themselves/share with well-being champion. (extra help)

**Staff members also have access to our “Buddy Box”.**

This is located in the cupboard and can be used by staff whenever they feel they are having a bad day or just need a little bit of self-care to get through the day. Sometimes all we need is a buddy to take care of us.

This includes….

* Food items (missed breakfast or forgotten lunch)
* Emergency toiletries
* Little self-care treats to use at home

**Supporting children and families Mental Health and Well- being:**

Supporting families:

Fowlmere Playgroup believe it is key to have positive relationships with families of children attending our setting as this means that we know the family well and understand the circumstances faced by them all; we are therefore aware of any changes that may impact upon the families emotional health and well- being which could include noticing changes to a child’s behaviour. Key workers of Fowlmere Playgroup are assigned to each family and we try to keep the same key worker for all children/siblings that attend to enable us to maintain these close relationships and strongly feel that this supports us to know each family really well and understand exactly the needs that they have individually.

We believe it is vitally important to always being available to parents at all times this enables us to have good quality conversations and will check in at regular points either face to face or via emails to ensure that everything is ok at home. All staff at Fowlmere playgroup are open and welcoming and hope that our families understand that we are here to help and that if we ourselves are unsure we will find a service or professional that may be able to help in a more specialised way.

We believe that these things will benefit children & families by….

•Children who are more engaged with learning

•Parents who are more engaged with the nursery and more in tune with their child’s learning & development

•High morale within the setting

•Good relationships developed between staff, parents & children.

•The good emotional health of the children

We are aware that new families to Fowlmere Playgroup may find it more difficult to ask for help or discuss problems they are facing whilst our relationships build so we have a number of solutions in place to overcome barriers they may have to ensure we are promoting the mental health and well-being of all families. Just like every child being unique we understand that not all families may respond and work with us in the same way and that we may need to adapt or tweak support we can provide such as low literacy levels, limited technology devices at home or English as an additional language.

Disclosing problems or difficulties faced surrounding mental health can be hard and we ensure that staff are not judgemental but are also empathetic even if we do not totally understand how we can personally help ourselves. It is truly beneficial that this first step has been taken for all within the family but we understand that some may not want to ask for help and would prefer to seek support by their selves, which is why we have now added a support tab to our website for additional information and contact details for specialised support and services.

Supporting children:

Young children can struggle to express their emotions and manage their behaviour in difficult situations; it is how we support children from a young age that will impact their positive mental health and well-being as they grow. It is important to remember that young children are still trying to make sense of the world and that changes in their home life such as the arrival of new sibling, separation or divorce and moving house may affect them more than it will us. It is vital that we make children aware where possible before it happens and if you are unsure of how to help your child through this change we are always to here to help as we have a range of resources and books that may help them overcome fears and worries they have relating to this change.

Children need consistent role models that they can rely on and count on in difficult situations so that they can build upon the way they organise/respond to situations that are unknown to them. By responding to children in predictable ways we are providing them with trust and the communication needed to problem solve and explore new things to build the emotional literacy needed to engage and thrive in the outside world.

We believe to truly help children we need to support them too….

* Develop Resilience (being able to bounce back from difficulties and challenging situations)
* Self-regulate their emotions (to manage their own feelings and behaviour)
* Acknowledge and identify emotions children have to help secure their understanding on how they feel (I can see you are feeling sad because…)
* To support children to have a clear sense of identity and improve self-worth/self-esteem
* Listen to them when disclosing how they are feeling and help them to find strategies on how to overcome difficult situations
* Promoting positive routines in all aspects of their lives (set meal and bed times) to enable children with the concentration needed to learn and interact with others
* Recognise that others have feelings too and that these may be different to their own whilst be being considerate to others emotions.
* Provide children with positive experiences of mental health such as strong positive relationships (this includes the attachment/relationship with children’s key workers and how we react and model behaviour when faced with challenging situations that may impact upon our mental health and well-being.)
* Providing children with a safe space and secure environment to explore.

Our environment:

To ensure children feel truly comfortable whilst at playgroup we ensure that changes are kept to a minimum within our daily routines and that they feel like they belong and are truly part of Fowlmere playgroup we do this by…

* Group morning registration including self-registration where children are able to place their names to a photo of themselves on our “who is here today board” which contains all of the children’s photos to provide them with a sense of identity.
* Named pegs within our cloak room for coats and belongings so that children are able to bring things from home such as spare clothes to provide children with a sense of belonging.
* A visual timetable showing children the routines and steps we will take throughout the day (this especially supports children who struggle with change or transition)
* Fixed places for meal/snack times and group stories/singing to provide security for children
* Use of Calm Down corner a safe space that children can escape too when needing to manage their feelings or have a bit of space from others.
* Our emotion clouds where they can place a photo of themselves onto their desired feeling and welcome to give an explanation / share their emotion.

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| This policy was adopted by | Fowlmere Playgroup |  |
| On | May 2021 |  |
| Date to be reviewed | May 2024 |  |
| Signed on behalf of the provider |  | |
| Name of signatory | Kayleigh Holwell | |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) | Chair person | |

Reviewed June 2022 Verity Smith

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