7.2 Lone Working Policy

At Stowey Bears, we aim to ensure that staff are not left working alone in the preschool room, toileting or changing areas, sensory room, entrance area, or outdoor areas. Where short periods of lone working cannot reasonably be avoided, we will ensure that children remain safe, staff-to-child ratios are maintained, and suitable risk assessments, supervision arrangements and emergency procedures are in place.

This policy should be read alongside our safeguarding and child protection policy, staff behaviour/code of conduct policy, health and safety policy, risk assessment procedures, intimate care policy, whistleblowing policy, and emergency procedures.

When lone working may occur

Examples of short, unavoidable periods of lone working may include staff toilet breaks, nappy changing or intimate care, collecting lunches, comforting a child in a quiet space, following a child's interest outdoors, supporting children in the toileting area, completing routine duties such as checking the outdoor area, filling water bottles, preparing snack, handovers with parents or carers, and settling children.

Before any lone working takes place, staff and management must consider whether the arrangement is necessary, proportionate, time-limited and safe. Lone working must not be used where it would compromise the safety, welfare or supervision of children.

Legal and statutory requirements

Stowey Bears will follow the current Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, including safeguarding and welfare requirements, staff suitability, staff-to-child ratios, paediatric first aid, supervision, training, and the requirement to keep children safe and healthy. We will also follow health and safety duties to assess and manage risks to staff, including risks arising when staff work without close or direct supervision.

Risk assessment and controls

Management will ensure that lone working arrangements are covered by a written risk assessment. This will consider the activity, location, number and needs of children, staff experience and qualifications, visibility, access to support, communication methods, security, medical needs, intimate care, emergency evacuation, and any safeguarding concerns.

- A named person in charge must know when and where lone working is taking place.
- Staff-to-child ratios must be maintained at all times and adjusted for the age, needs and circumstances of the children present.
- Lone working must be kept to the shortest practicable time and must not become routine without review.
- The staff member must be able to summon help immediately, including by phone, internal communication system or agreed alert procedure.
- Children must remain within appropriate sight and/or hearing, taking account of the activity and risk assessment.
- Doors, gates and access points must be secure so that children cannot leave unnoticed and unauthorised people cannot enter.

- Any incident, concern, near miss or safeguarding issue must be recorded and reported to management as soon as possible.

Staff responsibilities

- Tell another member of staff or the named person in charge before leaving a colleague alone with children.
- Check that ratios, supervision and safeguarding arrangements remain appropriate before leaving the room or area.
- Ensure the lone staff member has access to a working phone or agreed communication method and relevant emergency contact information.
- Ensure the environment is safe, secure and suitable for the activity taking place.
- Return within the agreed time and alert management if delayed.
- Report any concern, accident, incident, near miss, allegation or safeguarding issue immediately and follow the setting's recording procedures.

Management responsibilities

- Ensure staff are suitable, competent and confident to carry out their role, including safeguarding, child protection, paediatric first aid where required, behaviour support, intimate care, emergency evacuation and fire procedures.
- Ensure staff receive induction, supervision, ongoing support and relevant refresher training.
- Ensure a manager, deputy or other named responsible person is available to provide support during opening hours and, where applicable, outside normal opening hours.
- Review staffing levels, deployment and risk assessments regularly, particularly after incidents, changes in children's needs, staff changes, complaints or safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure lone working arrangements do not place staff or children at avoidable risk and do not prevent staff from following safeguarding procedures, whistleblowing procedures or emergency procedures.

Emergency procedures and review

If a staff member working alone becomes ill, injured, concerned about a child, unable to maintain safe supervision, or unable to contact support, they must follow the emergency procedure immediately. This may include calling another staff member, contacting management, calling emergency services, or following safeguarding escalation procedures. This policy and the related risk assessments will be reviewed annually, whenever legislation or statutory guidance changes, and after any relevant incident, concern or near miss.

This Policy was adopted on January 2023	Signed on behalf of the Preschool – Rachel Penny	Date for Review: Reviewed annually