**Mucky Pups Preschool**

**Separated Families Policy**

**Aim**

*The aim of this policy is to ensure that separated families have an equal opportunity to be involved and supported throughout the time at nursery to the best of our ability and to set out how we as a setting will support all those involved including the staff team.*

At Mucky Pups we understand that when parents separate from each other this can be a very difficult time for all concerned and can result in emotions running high.

The child’s keyworker always works closely with the children and their families and this will continue. The Keyworker will support the children’s emotional wellbeing and will ensure that they work closely with the parents to ensure this. Any changes in behaviour will be monitored and reported to the parents. The keyworker, with support from the management team, can signpost the family to the relevant services for support. Where decisions regarding the child need to be made the person/s with parental responsibility will always be the ones consulted for this.

**Parent responsibility:**

What is parental responsibility?

Parental responsibility means the legal rights, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has for a child and the child’s property. A person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to make decisions about their care and upbringing. The following list sets out some of the key features of someone holding parental responsibility:

* Providing a home for the child,
* Protect and maintain the child,
* Disciplining the child,
* Choosing and providing for the child’s education,
* Agreeing to the child’s medical treatment,
* Naming the child and agreeing to any change of name,
* Looking after the child’s property,
* Determining the religion of the child,
* Appointing a guardian for the child, if necessary,
* Allowing confidential information about the child to be disclosed.

Who has parental responsibility?

A Mother automatically has parental responsibility for their child at the time of birth. A father usually has parental responsibility if they are married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth and are listed on the child’s birth certificate. Parents do not lose parental responsibility if they divorce. This applies to the resident and non-resident parent.

This is not the case for parents who are not married. According to current law, a mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child. However, A Father not married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth does not automatically receive parental responsibility. A Father can acquire parental responsibility through one of these routes:

* By jointly registering the birth of the child with the child’s mother. (Both names being on the birth certificate)
* By a parental responsibility agreement with the mother,
* By a parental; responsibility order made by the court.

Mucky Pups preschool will only allow those with parental responsibility to make decisions regarding the child. This is detailed further below.

**Registration:**

Providing information.

During the registration process we ask for information on parental responsibility through our registration forms. This is to ensure that only those with parental responsibility can make any decisions on behalf of the child. True and correct information MUST be put on this form. If there are any changes to parental responsibility the setting MUST be told as soon as possible and definitely before the child next attends.

If a parent does not have parental responsibility or has a court order in place to prevent this, we must have seen this document and have a copy on file for the child. This will be kept with the child’s registration details.

If a child is registered by one parent of a separated family, we still ask for a full disclosure of all relevant details relating to the child’s other parent such as any court orders or injunctions. This will ensure that we can support the child and family in accordance with this policy.

**Agreement.**

Mucky Pups will:

* Put the child at the centre of everything we do. We will ensure the child’s welfare is paramount while they are in our care,
* Comply fully with any details of a court order, where applicable.
* Provide information on the child’s progress, EG, progress checks and learning journey’s, to both parents where both parents hold parental responsibility and there is nothing legally in place to stop this.
* Invite both parents to any developmental meetings,
* Invite both parents to any nursery social events,
* Ensure any incidents or accident s while at the nursery are reported to the person collecting the child,
* Ensure that all details known to the staff regarding the parent’s separation remain confidential (as per the settings confidentiality policy),
* Ensuring no staff take sides or acts in favour of one parent regarding the separation and treats both parents equally and with respect,
* Not restrict access to any parent with parental responsibility unless a formal court order is in place and the setting has seen and taken a copy of the document.

**We respectfully ask that parents do not put us in apposition where they ask us to restrict access to another parent, we will not take sides.**

We ask that parents:

* Provide us with all information relating to parental responsibilities and any court orders and injunctions,
* Update us of any updates or changes to the above as soon as possible and definitely before the child next attends,
* Work closely to ensure continuity of care for your child,
* Not include any of the staff in family disputes,
* Talk to the manager/your child’s keyworker away from your child when this relates to the separation, or changes to parental responsibility etc to avoid the child becoming upset. This can be arranged I advance as a formal meeting or a space con be provided as needed for an informal chat,
* Not ask the setting to take sides in any dispute. Mucky Pups will only take the side of the child and this requires us to be neutral and fair at all times.

Working together we want to help you ensure that while your child is with us at Mucky Pups that they are as happy as possible. This can be achieved if we all work together.

Date Policy adopted: 2nd September 2023 Date for review: 2nd September 2024

Signed: **J E Wills**  Position: Manager