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**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY**

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| Policy name | Parental Involvement Policy |
| Applicable to | All employees |
| Effective from | October 2018 |
| Date approved by trustees | 25 June 2018 |
| Next revision date | October 2023 |
| Other references | Equal Opportunities Policy; Confidentiality Policy; Comments and Complaints Policy; |

1. **Introduction**

1.1 Howgill Family Centre (Howgill) aims to provide support for children and families so that every child might have equality of opportunity to achieve their full potential. The organisation provides distinctive services to children and families based on trusting relationships, actively encouraging parents to be involved in their child’s development.

Howgill adopts a collaborative approach as it believes that children benefit most from care and Early Years education when parents and professionals work together in partnership. Families are at the centre and there are high expectations of the adults in the relationship. The aim is to support parents to understand their parental responsibilities and fulfil their role as their child’s first and most important educators by:

* involving them in their child’s development and introduction to education
* supporting them in their own continuing education and personal development
* encouraging parents to influence, and contribute to, Howgill’s activities and practices.

This policy establishes a framework to support employees and volunteers in their practices and clarifies the organisation’s expectations of parents in establishing this collaborative approach.

1.2 This policy does not form part of any employees’ contract of employment and may be amended from time to time.

1.3 The Board of Trustees is responsible for the policy and will conduct regular reviews to ensure that it is maintained, particularly in relation to its legal responsibilities, and amendments will be made as necessary. The Chief Executive has responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented and that appropriate procedures are established to ensure compliance.

1.4 All employees have an obligation to familiarise themselves with this policy.

1. **Definitions**

2.1 For the purposes of this policy, ‘parents’ are those individuals who have contact with, and play an active part in, the child’s life and may include:

* father and/or mother
* main carer or legal guardian (in some cases grandparents or other close relatives)

1. **Principles**

3.1 Howgill is committed to establishing positive relationships with the parents of every child involved in its activities.

3.2 More particularly, Howgill will aim to ensure that all parents:

* are encouraged to play an active role in the early development and education of the child for whom they have responsibility
* understand their parental responsibilities and the role that is expected of them, and are consulted to establish what works best for them to maximise learning opportunities
* are kept informed of their child’s progress to allow development to be monitored as appropriate.

3.3 Howgill will actively encourage parents to provide feedback on its activities and services as a means of assessment and improvement of its practices.

3.4 Howgill is committed to ensuring that it provides equal opportunities for all users of its services, in accordance with its Equal Opportunities policy.

1. **Playing an active role and feedback**

4.1 Howgill understands the importance of encouraging parents to be actively involved with their child’s learning to help them achieve their potential. All employees will promote engagement with parents with a view to:

* informing parents of the benefits of active involvement
* supporting parents to become involved in appropriate developmental activities.

4.2 Opportunities will be provided for parents to gain knowledge of the learning of young children through formal educational activities and reinforced through informal activities at home.

4.3 Howgill may provide opportunities for parents to contribute their own skills, knowledge and interests to its activities for the benefit of all participants. Contributions from parents will be welcomed, whatever form they may take.

4.4 Howgill will provide opportunities on an individual basis for parents to play an active part in the work of the organisation e.g. helping with activities/trips and volunteering,

4.5 Howgill will encourage parents to provide feedback on its services and activities, which may be through completion of a questionnaire or informal discussion. All ideas and suggestions will be reviewed and assessed in accordance with the Comments and Complaints policy.

All feedback will be treated as confidential in accordance with Howgill’s Confidentiality policy.

4.6 Where a parent expresses dissatisfaction with any aspect relating to Howgill, this will be registered as a complaint and dealt with in accordance with the Comments and Complaints policy.

1. **Parental responsibilities**

5.1 Howgill will provide activities to inform parents of their parental responsibilities and the benefits of taking a key role in their child’s personal development.

5.2 Appropriate support will be given to parents to develop their skills and knowledge and gain confidence in their parental role.

5.3 Parents will be encouraged to work in partnership with Howgill, through discussion and feedback, to facilitate an improvement in their knowledge of:

* the needs of their child
* how to support their family.

5.4 Whenever possible, Howgill will adopt a flexible approach to ensure that all parents can be involved and the needs of the child are identified. Procedures will ensure that all parents are included where appropriate, which may require different strategies for those parents who work or live apart from their child.

5.5 Howgill will endeavour to ensure that parents acquire the necessary skills and confidence that will enable them to provide their child with continuing support and guidance throughout the child’s development.

1. **Keeping parents informed**

6.1 Howgill will ensure that:

* all new parents are made aware of:
* its facilities and services
* its policies and procedures, particularly for the Early Years provision
* all parents are informed of:
* the allocation where appropriate of a Key Worker for their child, who the Key Worker is, and the shared roles and responsibilities.
* appropriate meetings, workshops, training events and other activities, and will be actively encouraged to attend
* trips, holiday play schemes and fundraising events, and are given every opportunity to take part as appropriate.

6.2 Parents will be informed on a regular basis about their child’s progress, and be given access to their child’s records, if requested.

6.3 Regular newsletters and other information will be distributed to keep parents informed of events, including fundraising. Details of all events will be displayed on Howgill’s website.