Professional Love Policy

1. Introduction

We believe that children ought to have a sense of love, bond and security comparable to, but not the same as, the love of the home and family. (The educator or teacher is *in loco parentis* but is not the parent.)
'Professional Love' provides practitioners with the language to appropriately describe the close, loving, intimate and affectionate bond which, over time, is inevitably developed with the children in their care.

The impact of professional love in early years is profound, benefiting both children and educators. It creates a secure environment where children feel valued, boosting their eagerness to learn and explore.

Understanding professional love helps parents see the value in early years education, not just for academic learning but for emotional and social development too. It's about ensuring every child feels supported, understood, and ready to take on the world.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Key Person Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Intimate care Policy and Nappy/sleep procedures
- Settling in Policy
- Transition Policy
- Babysitting Policy
- Special education needs and disability Policy

2. Contents

The following sections are included in this policy document:

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3. Purpose

This policy sets out Home from Homes approach to Professional Love and the way we build bonds with children in our care. This policy aims to navigate so that we remain vigilant with our safeguarding policies and practices without conflicting with the value of professional love,

It aims to provide practitioners guidance of what safe contact looks like. Supporting practitioners to establish healthy boundaries that are applied consistently whilst allowing for individual children's needs.

4. What is Professional Love?

Dr Jools Page who led a team of researchers at Sheffield University described Professional Love as '*a reciprocal relationship which some practitioners might establish with babies and young children. It's impossible to love a child in the way a parent would, and professional love doesn't seek to build that type of bond. Parental love is of course, deep and personal. Professional love is more about providing a supportive and loving environment in a more educational setting. Professional love shown by an early year's professional, should complement the relationships a child has with their parents or carer.'.*

5. Why is professional love important?

Emotional warmth and care are crucial for children to thrive, going way beyond just being nice to them. Professional love in early years education means really understanding what each child needs and building trusty relationships.

It's not just about cuddles and kind words (though they're important!). Professional love is about making children feel at home while keeping things professional. It's about seeing them as whole people, where feeling good and safe is just as important as learning their ABCs.

Children who feel loved and secure are more curious, more eager to learn, and get along better with others. It's all about being there for them in the right way, whether that's with a comforting chat or just being by their side when they need it.

6. How professional love in early years works in practice

For parents, understanding how professional love in early years is applied can be reassuring. Here are some ways we put it into action at Home from Home:

- **We build trust with transparent communication:** We regularly engage with families to build a foundation of trust. For example, we share insights about your child's day, discuss developmental milestones, and are open about our caregiving approach.

- **We focus on a responsive caregiving approach:** We tailor our interactions to meet the individual needs of each child. By understanding and responding to the emotional and developmental needs of children, we can ensure our approach is both caring and professional.
- **We invest in our own professional development in emotional literacy:** We invest in training for staff on understanding and managing our own emotions as well as recognising and responding to the emotions of children. This helps in nurturing emotional connections within professional boundaries.
- **We establish clear policies and guidelines:** We develop and communicate clear guidelines on physical contact, confidentiality, and interpersonal interactions within the setting. This helps staff understand their roles with confidence and clarity.
- **We foster community and practice cultural sensitivity:** We understand and respect the diverse backgrounds of the children in our care. Incorporating cultural sensitivity into our practice strengthens relationships with families and helps children feel valued and understood.

7. Settling your child into the setting

Here at Home from Home Nursery, the settling in period is a key time for the key person to build a bond with the children and parents. Our staff at Home from Home understand the importance of supporting the children's needs and providing a caring environment.

During the settle period the child's Key person and buddy spends time getting to know the family with the aims of creating a safe and secure place where the family can share their thoughts, concerns and suggestions without fear of preconceptions or judgment. The Key person is there to listen and support, and is aware of the significant role a parent plays in their child's life. **(Refer to Key person policy for more information)**

8. Providing comfort

The staff provide love, care and a nurturing environment that promotes positive attachments for the children. The employees are not considered a substitute for a parent but aim to provide a solid foundation where a child feels safe and secure, knowing anxieties children may face when separated from their parents. The employees provide comfort by

- Smiling
- Using warm tones and verbal affection
- Using eye contact
- Physical contact such giving the children hugs and stroking the children's backs.

Human touch is fundamental for a child's wellbeing and by using these techniques we aim to calm the children and build their trust so they feel safe and secure in our care.

We are there to comfort the children when they need it, however we do encourage independence as much as possible. The employees avoid having the children sat on their

laps for long periods and will distract them with activities or toys as much as possible. We also have a 'no kissing' rule as we feel this is not portraying 'professional love'. If a child tells a practitioner that they 'love them' the employees acknowledge the child and thank them for the compliment and will move the conversation on, they will not repeat it back.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and also in line with any changes in statutory guidance.

10. Version Control

Version	Date	Status	Comments	By
1	January 2025	1st Draft		Sophie Eade
2	February 2025	Draft with Julia comments		Julia Pattenden
3	March 2025	Issued		Sophie Eade
4	May 2026	Reviewed		Sophie Eade