



Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

At Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school, we recognise our paramount responsibility is to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. Safeguarding encompasses protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable them to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is an essential part of safeguarding and refers specifically to the activity undertaken to protect individual children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

We aim to create a "culture of vigilance" and an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to. All staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
- The Prevent Duty (2015)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act (2003) and Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Data Protection Act (2018) & UK GDPR
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Education Act 2002
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015)
- Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Multi-agency statutory guidance on FGM
- Local Safeguarding Partnership Procedures

Advice for Early Years, Childcare Providers
and other Professionals

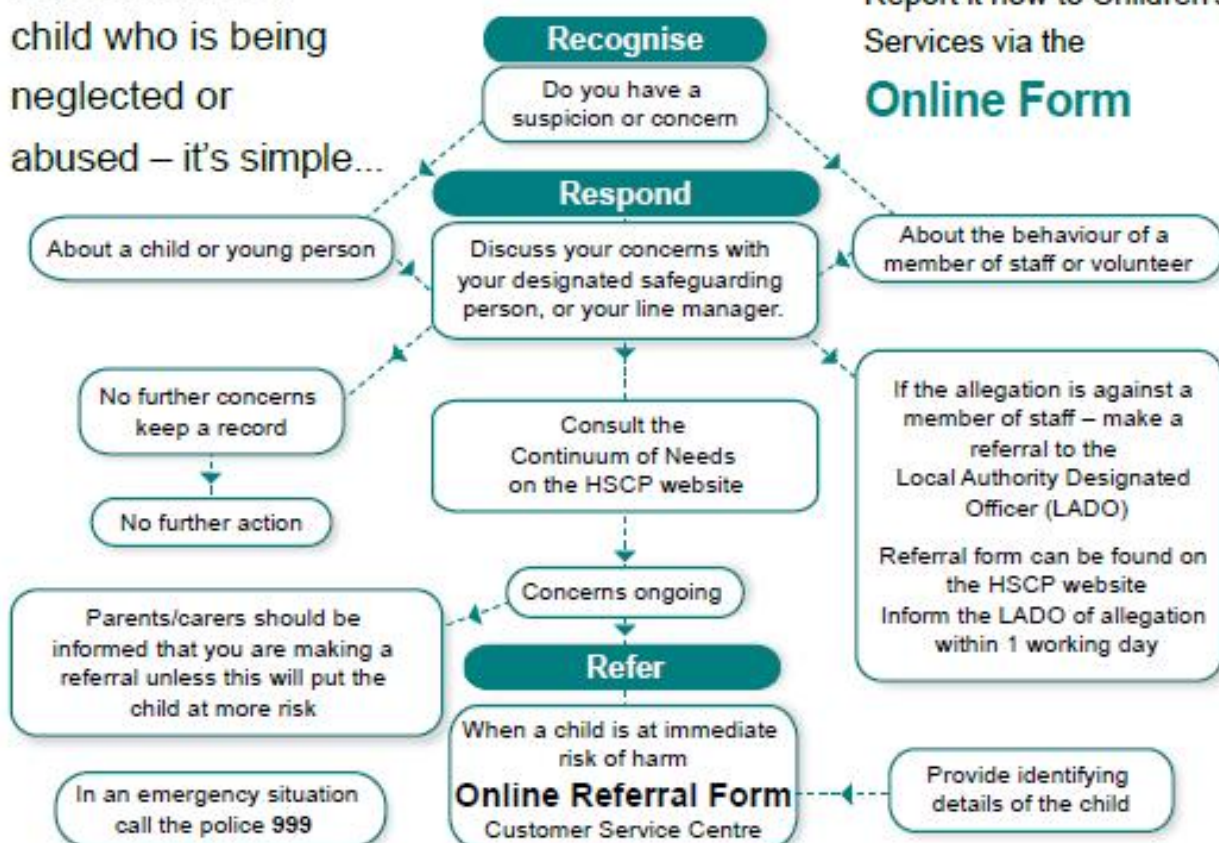
Recognise, Respond and Refer

Children have a right to
be cared for and protected
and protecting them is
everyone's responsibility



If you know of a
child who is being
neglected or
abused – it's simple...

Report it now to Children's
Services via the
Online Form



Children have a right to be cared for and protected
and protecting them is everyone's responsibility

Safeguarding Children



HERTFORDSHIRE
safeguarding children
PARTNERSHIP



Childcare (0311) 044

May 2024

Safeguarding Principles and Aims

We are committed to:

- Creating an open, listening culture.
- Ensuring all staff are vigilant and responsive.
- Supporting children's development in ways that foster security, confidence, and independence.
- Providing a safe environment free from discrimination or bullying.
- Ensuring safer recruitment procedures.
- Ensuring all concerns are acted upon swiftly and appropriately.
- Working in partnership with parents/carers and external agencies.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are:

DSL: Roxanne Speede - Manager

DSL - Linda McLellan - SENCo

All DSLs are trained to Level 3 and receive refresher training two years.

Training & Induction

- All staff receive Safeguarding training in line with Annex C of the EYFS.
- Annual Safeguarding training is mandatory within Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school
- Training covers: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Prevent Duty, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), peer-on-peer abuse, online safety, and the signs of abuse.
- DSLs receive advanced training and updates in line with Local Safeguarding Partnerships (LSP) recommendations.

Managing Concerns and Disclosures

All safeguarding concerns must be:

- Reported immediately to a DSL.
- Recorded factually using our Safeguarding Incident Reporting form. Practitioners to complete part 1, DSL's to complete part 2.
Refer to our Safeguarding Incident form for recording information required.
- Kept confidential and stored securely.
- Acted on in line with local safeguarding procedures.

Early Help & Multi-Agency Working

Where appropriate, we will work with families to seek support before issues escalate. Where significant concerns exist, referrals will be made to Children's Services.

We understand our responsibility to contribute to Child Protection Conferences, Child in Need Plans, and Early Help Assessments.

Continuum of needs - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/childrens-services/hscb/professionals/continuum-of-needs-for-children-and-young-people.pdf>

Key definitions

Safeguarding - Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online. Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.

Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection - To protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

Significant harm – Significant Harm is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development, including for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Sometimes a single violent episode may constitute significant harm but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, damage or change the child's development.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6849a7b67cba25f610c7db3f/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – advice for practitioners

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf

Categories of Abuse

All staff are trained to recognise indicators of abuse and understand that children may not always disclose abuse directly.

Recognising Physical Abuse

Physical Abuse is defined as causing intentional physical harm to a child

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

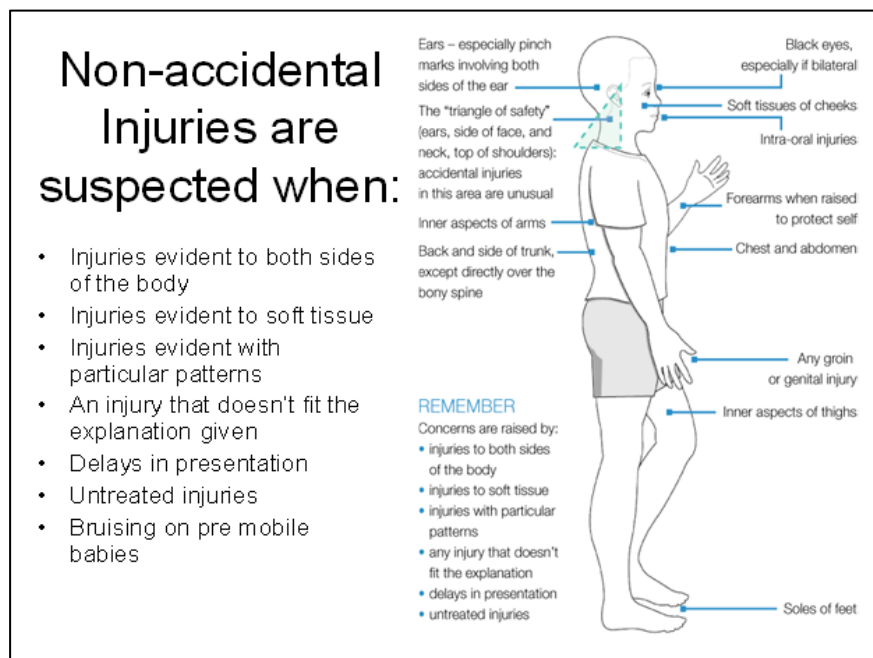
It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse

Physical Observations	Behavioural Observations
• Bruising especially on trunk; on face, upper arm, shoulders and neck consistent with gripping; fingertip bruising/finger marks • Burns and scalds, especially cigarette burns, burns caused by lengthy exposure to heat • Human bite marks • Fractures, particularly spiral fractures and especially in under 2s • Swelling and lack of normal use of limbs • Any serious injury with no explanation or conflicting explanations/inconsistent accounts • Untreated injuries	• Unusually fearful with adults • Unnaturally compliant to parents or fear of going home • Refusal to discuss injuries/fear of medical help • Withdrawal from physical contact • Aggression towards others • Wears cover-up clothing

Children with disabilities are up to **three times more likely** to be abused. Some of the reasons may be:

- They are more likely to receive intimate care from more people.
- They are likely to spend more time away from the family.
- They may be less able to communicate.
- It may be hard to see where disability ends and signs and symptoms of abuse begin.
- Children with disabilities are less likely to disclose abuse, or to be listened to, or treated as a reliable witness if they do make a disclosure.



Hertfordshire Bruising Policy

In Hertfordshire – if a baby **under the age of 6 months** presents with a bruise/injury, there is a mandatory reporting duty to Children's Services. Babies are incredibly vulnerable and when unable to move it could be that injuries have been caused by deliberate injury. Even when bruising is due to falls and knocks the family may benefit from advice. We find out about birth marks during registration so these can be ruled out as injuries

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may feature imposing developmentally age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on the children.

It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in most types of ill treatment of children, though emotional abuse may occur alone.

Possible Indicators of Emotional Abuse

Physical Observations	Behavioural Observations
• Physical, mental and developmental delay • Acceptance of punishment which appears excessive • Over-reaction to mistakes • Continual self-deprecation • Sudden speech disorders • Fear of new situations • Compulsive stealing or scavenging	• Excessive fear of making mistakes • Unwillingness or inability to play • Neurotic behaviour (such as rocking, hair twisting, thumb sucking) • Self-mutilation • Fear of parents being contacted • Extremes of passivity or aggression • Excessive lack of confidence and need for approval, attention and affection • Inability to cope with praise

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of her/his health and development.

It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical and emotional harm or danger, or the failure to access appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Possible Indicators of Neglect

Physical Observations	Behavioural Observations
• Poor personal hygiene • Poor state of clothing • Inappropriate clothing • Emaciation, pot belly, short stature • Poor skin and hair tone • Untreated medical problems • Severe Nappy rash	• Constant hunger • Constant tiredness • Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school • Destructive tendencies • Low self-esteem • Neurotic behaviour • No social relationships • Running away • Compulsive stealing or scavenging • Baby who never cries

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts.

They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at/production of abusive images, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

Physical Observations	Behavioural Observations
• Damage or soreness to genitalia, anus or mouth • Sexually transmitted disease • Unexpected pregnancy, especially in very young children • Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain • Discomfort when child is walking or sitting down	• Sexual knowledge inappropriate to the child's age • Sexualised behaviour in young children • Sexually provocative behaviour/promiscuity • Hinting at sexual activity • Inexplicable falling off in school performance • Sudden apparent changes in personality • Lack of concentration, restlessness, aimlessness • Socially withdrawn • Overly compliant behaviour • Acting out aggressive behaviour • Poor trust or apparent fear in adults • Regressive behaviour, onset of wetting, day and night • Onset of insecure, clinging behaviour

The Brook sexual behaviours traffic light tool, a tool to identify typical sexual behaviours in children.

<https://www.brook.org.uk/education/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/>

Other Safeguarding Issues

a. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM), also called 'female cutting' or 'female circumcision', is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons.

FGM can cause severe psychological, emotional and medical problems. It can include extreme pain, shock, infection and many other long term serious medical issues.

FGM is illegal and against the law in the UK.

Staff are aware it is a legal duty to report FGM in under 18s where it is known or suspected. Key indicators include:

- Families planning travel to FGM-practising countries. <https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hard-Copy-Map.pdf>
- Girls disclosing they will undergo a "procedure".
- Signs such as difficulty sitting, urinary issues, or emotional distress.
- Changes in behaviour
- Missing school, particularly after a trip to a country where FGM is common
- Spending longer than usual going to the toilet
- Avoiding going to the toilet
- Avoiding physical exercise
- Frequent urinary infections

Immediate referrals are made to the police and children's services.

- *Complete a Contact- <https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/child-protection-referral> or if Urgent Phone- 0300 123 4043. NB- If child is felt to be at risk of immediate danger or a crime is committed is call the police using the emergency telephone number 999*

b. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a form of abuse involving manipulation and/or coercion for sexual purposes, often in exchange for goods, status, or affection. Key indicators include:

- Inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Withdrawn or secretive behaviour.
- Gifts from unknown adults.
- Sudden changes in friendships or mood.
- Physical injuries
- absenteeism

- deterioration in physical appearance

c. Child Criminal Exploitation & County Lines

County lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups (OCGs) use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas.

They exploit vulnerable people, including children and those with mental health or addiction issues, by recruiting them to distribute the drugs. This is often referred to as 'drug running'. Criminals may also use a vulnerable person's home as their base of operations. This is known as 'cuckooing'.

We recognise signs of grooming into drug-related gangs (County Lines), including:

- Sudden unexplained absences.
- Possession of expensive items.
- Aggressive or fearful behaviour.
- Multiple mobile phones.

d. Prevent Duty & Radicalisation

The Prevent Strategy aims to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism by:

- tackling the ideological causes of terrorism
- intervening early to support people susceptible to radicalisation
- enabling people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate

We are alert to signs of radicalisation and extremism. Indicators include:

- Isolation from peers.
- Expression of extremist views
- Inappropriate behaviours, actions or knowledge outside of normal age expectations
- Fixation on ideology or hatred.

Referrals to the Channel Panel may be made as part of Prevent duties.

National Prevent Referral Form - <https://thegrid.org.uk/assets/prevent-national-referral-form-2025.pdf>

e. Domestic Abuse & Operation Encompass

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Domestic violence/abuse is a crime. If we have awareness that a child is in a household where Domestic violence/abuse is present, we have a duty to refer in Hertfordshire. We participate in Operation Encompass, which notifies the DSL of police-attended domestic abuse incidents. This enables us to provide immediate support and monitor the child's well-being.

<https://www.operationencompass.org/>

f. Honour-Based Abuse, Forced Marriage, and Honour Based Violence

We recognise that Honour Based Violence (HBV), including forced marriage, is a safeguarding issue and not a cultural norm. Staff are trained to identify risk indicators, such as:

- Sudden family travel plans.
- Expressions of fear about marriage or cultural punishment.

All concerns are treated as child abuse and referred accordingly.

g. Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)

FII involves a parent or carer deliberately exaggerating or inducing illness in a child. Staff are trained to:

- Recognise patterns of frequent medical visits.
- Monitor unexplained symptoms not observed by professionals.
- Record inconsistencies between reported and observed behaviour.

h. Children Missing in Education (CME)

Children missing from nursery without a valid reason are flagged for possible safeguarding concerns, especially where patterns of absence develop. Staff will:

- Contact parents/carers promptly.
- Notify the Local Authority where appropriate (e.g., where EY funding is involved).
- Record absences and follow guidelines in line with our **Early Years Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Policy**

i. Peer-on-Peer Abuse, Upskirting, and Sexual Violence

Peer-on-peer child abuse is a term used to describe children abusing other children. We are alert to all forms of peer-on-peer abuse, including:

- bullying (including online bullying and bullying because of someone's race, religion, sexuality, disability or trans status)
- Sexual harassment or violence
- upskirting (a criminal offence under the Voyeurism Act 2019).

All disclosures are taken seriously and recorded appropriately. Support for both victims and perpetrators is offered in line with government guidance.

Looked-After Children (LAC)

We ensure LAC receive targeted support and positive interactions to promote emotional stability and resilience. The DSL liaises with the Virtual School Head* and social workers as needed, and Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are maintained.

*Hertfordshire Virtual School

Email: virtualschool@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01992 556956

Website: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/Virtual-School/Hertfordshire-Virtual-School.aspx>

Online Safety

Children are increasingly vulnerable to online risks. We implement robust policies covering:

- Use of mobile phones.
- Supervised use of technology.
- Filtering and monitoring.

Promoting Positive Safeguarding Culture – Everyone's Responsibility

SAFER EATING - Children are always with in sight AND hearing and a PFA qualified practitioner present. Food is prepared in a way to prevent choking (where applicable).

ALLERGIES- we gather details before child starts, implement a health care/allergy plan if required, allergy mats are allocated to individual children.

ATTENDANCE – we MUST follow up on absences and have a policy in place

SUPERVISION – Ratios, registers, staff deployment, key person role.

SECURITY – Keeping doors/gates closed. Ensuring fire exits are clear. Visitors to the premises are verified using a Ring video doorbell.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

We are bound by the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. However, where a child's welfare is at risk, safeguarding concerns override data protection regulations. Information is shared securely, on a need-to-know basis, with relevant agencies.

Contacts

Useful contact information

Families First: 0300 123 4043

Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline: 08088 088 088

Welwyn and Hatfield Family Centre: 0300 123 7572

Ofsted: 0300 1234 666

Welwyn Hatfield Children's Social Care Team: 0300 123 4043

PREVENT: 0800 789 321 (anti-terrorist hotline)

NSPCC/Childline: 0800 1111

LADO: 0300 123 4043

Emergency calls: **999**

Non-emergency police calls: **101**

Always call all 999 in Emergencies!

This policy was adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2025

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, guidance, or circumstances. Staff are consulted and trained on any updates.