

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Designated Safeguarding Lead Jessica Burns (Managing Director)

Deputy Safeguarding Lead Scott Marshall (Managing Director)

/Megan Hounsell (Deputy Manager)

Introduction

At *Little Cygnets Childcare Ltd*, safeguarding children is at the heart of everything we do safeguarding is everyone's business.

We believe every child deserves:

- A safe and nurturing environment where they can flourish.
- Adults who listen, care, and act in their best interests.
- Opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive free from fear, harm, or neglect.

This policy outlines how we protect children, train staff, work with families and agencies, and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Definition of Safeguarding

We adopt the Department for Education definition from *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*:

Safeguarding means:

1. Protecting children from maltreatment.
2. Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
3. Ensuring safe and effective care, consistent with children's needs.
4. Taking action to enable all children to achieve the best possible outcomes.



Safeguarding is a broad duty – it goes beyond protecting children from deliberate harm. It includes health, safety, emotional well-being, online safety, and fostering resilience.

Our Safeguarding Commitment

We are committed to:

- Making the welfare of children paramount (Children Act 1989 & 2004).
- Acting swiftly and effectively if a child is at risk of harm.
- Ensuring staff, students, apprentices, volunteers, parents, and visitors understand their safeguarding role.
- Promoting a listening culture, where children feel safe to share worries.
- Working in partnership with parents and agencies (police, health, education, social care).
- Embedding a whole-setting safeguarding culture where vigilance, openness, and accountability are the norm.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Safer Recruitment & Suitability

(EYFS 2025, Childcare Act 2006, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 principles)

At *Little Cygnets*, we are committed to ensuring that only suitable, safe, and appropriately qualified adults work with our children. We follow the principles of Safer Recruitment throughout the recruitment, induction, and employment process.

Application Process

- Applicants must complete a full application form – we do not accept CVs alone.
- Forms must include:

- Full employment history with no unexplained gaps.
- Explanation of any breaks in employment.
- Details of qualifications and training.
- Self-declarations about criminal history and disqualification status are requested at this stage.

Interview

- At least two interviewers are present.
- The Deputy Manager conducts the second part of the interview process, including a scoring system and additional comments for managers for selection purposes. This is stored alongside the candidates interview answers. The candidate spends time in the rooms with the Deputy to observe how they engage with the children and staff.
- Interviews include:
 - Competency-based questions about working with children linked to the EYFS framework and key areas of development.
 - Safeguarding-specific questions (e.g., "What would you do if a child disclosed something worrying to you?"). These include who they need to contact if they have concerns.
 - Scenario-based questions to test professional boundaries (e.g., "What would you do if you saw a colleague behaving inappropriately?").
- Identity documents are checked at the interview.
- Candidates are asked to explain any gaps in employment face-to-face.

References

- At least two written references are required.
- Must be obtained directly by Little Cygnets (not via the applicant).



- At least one must be from the most recent employer or training provider.
- References must:
 - Be written by a senior person (not a peer/colleague).
 - Confirm suitability to work with children.
 - Address any safeguarding issues, disciplinary action, or concerns.
- If reference details are unclear or contradictory, follow-up calls are made and documented.
- References must be received before employment begins.

Pre-Employment Checks

Before an offer is confirmed, the following checks are completed:

- Identity (passport, birth certificate, driving licence).
- Right to work in the UK (visa, settled status, etc.).
- Enhanced DBS check (with Update Service registration).
- Qualifications (original certificates checked and copied).
- Medical declaration (fitness to work).
- Disqualification by Association declaration (Childcare Disqualification Regulations 2018).
- Employment history verification (through references and discussions).

No staff member may start work until all mandatory checks are completed.

Employment Start



- Staff are given a full induction programme which includes:
 - Reading safeguarding and child protection policy.
 - Code of Conduct training.
 - Role of the DSL and reporting procedures.
 - Whistleblowing procedures.

Ongoing Suitability

- Staff are required to:
 - Disclose immediately any new convictions, cautions, court orders, or police involvement.
 - Confirm their suitability annually through a signed declaration.
- Managers carry out:
 - Regular DBS update checks.
 - Supervision sessions to review safeguarding awareness.
 - Annual appraisals including safeguarding competency.

Volunteers, Visitors & Students

- Volunteers and students must undergo:
 - DBS check if engaged in regular activity.
 - Safeguarding induction and supervision at all times.
- Visitors without clearance:



- Must never be left alone with children.
- Must sign in/out and show identification.

Record Keeping

- A staff file of recruitment and vetting checks is maintained, including:
 - Identity check details.
 - References received.
 - DBS certificate number and date.
 - Right to work confirmation.
 - Qualifications check.

Recognising Abuse & Neglect

Staff are trained to recognise early warning signs and respond appropriately. (See staff safeguarding policy)

Types of Abuse

- Physical abuse – hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, fabricated illness.
- Emotional abuse – humiliation, rejection, unrealistic expectations, exposure to domestic abuse.
- Sexual abuse – inappropriate touching, exploitation, grooming, exposure to sexual material.
- Neglect – failure to meet basic needs (food, warmth, medical care, supervision).

Other Safeguarding Risks

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – mandatory reporting duty.

- Radicalisation/Extremism – Prevent Duty.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) – manipulation, coercion, exploitation.
- County Lines – gangs exploiting children for drug trafficking.
- Online harm – grooming, cyberbullying, inappropriate content.
- Peer-on-peer abuse – bullying, harassment, sexualised behaviour.
- Inappropriate staff behaviour – breaches of boundaries (e.g., sexualised comments).

Staff are trained to notice, record, and act – even small changes in behaviour may be a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding Procedures

The following procedures set out how all safeguarding concerns must be managed at Little Cygnets. These procedures apply to all staff, apprentices, students, volunteers, visitors, and management.

Step 1 Immediate Response to a Concern

- If a member of staff notices a worrying change in behaviour, unexplained injury, disclosure, or any safeguarding risk, they must:
 - Stay calm and listen carefully.
 - Avoid leading questions – do not prompt or pressure the child.
 - Reassure the child but do not promise confidentiality.
 - Act immediately – safeguarding concerns must never be delayed until later in the day.

Example: A child says, “Daddy hit me.”

The staff member must listen, reassure, and follow procedures without showing shock or asking leading questions like “Did he hurt you badly?”.

Step 2 Recording the Concern

- Concerns must be recorded as soon as possible on the same day using the official Concern Form.
- Blank Concern Forms are located behind the Front Door Service poster on the staff notice board.
- Records must include:
 - Date, time, and staff member's name.
 - Full details of what was seen, heard, or disclosed.
 - Exact words used by the child or parent (in quotation marks).
 - A clear, factual account – no opinions, assumptions, or judgments.
 - Signature of the reporting staff member.
- If a child presents with a visible injury, staff should also complete an Existing Injuries Form if the parent has not already provided one.

Example of poor recording: “Child seemed upset and may have been shouted at.”

Example of good recording: “At 10:45am, James (age 3) said, ‘Mummy hurt me with the belt.’ Child appeared withdrawn and had a red mark on left arm.”

Step 3: Reporting to the DSL

- The completed Concern Form must be handed directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Jessica Burns.
- If Jessica is unavailable, the Deputy DSLs (Scott Marshall or Megan Hounsell) must be contacted immediately.

- The DSL is responsible for:
 - Reviewing the concern.
 - Making a professional judgment on next steps.
 - Seeking advice if needed (e.g., from the Front Door Service or MASH).

Staff must never keep concerns to themselves or assume someone else has reported it.

Step 4: DSL Decision-Making

Once informed, the DSL will decide whether the concern should be:

1. Referred immediately to the Front Door Service or Police (if significant risk of harm).
 - Serious injuries, sexual abuse, FGM disclosures, or immediate danger require same-day referral.
 - Emergency situations: staff or DSL call 999.
2. Monitored internally within the setting.
 - For low-level concerns, the DSL may monitor the child, gather additional observations, and review regularly.
 - Monitoring must never delay urgent referrals.
3. Discussed with parents/carers, unless doing so would put the child at further risk.
 - E.g., not informing parents if there is suspected abuse within the home.

DSL must record why they made their decision, including actions taken and next review date. Which is stored in a safeguarding file.

Step 5: Making a Referral



- Any staff member may make a direct referral to the Front Door Service if they believe a child is at risk.
- DSL should normally make the referral but staff retain individual responsibility.
- When making a referral, staff provide:
 - Child's full details (name, DOB, address).
 - Details of the concern (fact-based, not opinion).
 - Any relevant family information.
- Referrals may be made by:
 - Telephone to the Front Door Service (0345 2000 109).
 - Secure email (if instructed).
 - In urgent cases: Police – 999/112.

The DSL will notify Ofsted within 14 days of any safeguarding action, in line with the *Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021*.

Storage of Records

- The DSL files all Concern Forms, Existing Injuries Forms, and referral correspondence securely in a locked cabinet in the office or injury forms on Famly App.
- Electronic records (via the Famly app) are kept secure with restricted access only to DSL/Deputy DSL.
- Records must:
 - Be clear, factual, dated, and signed.
 - Include outcomes of referrals and professional decisions.

- Records are kept in line with statutory retention schedules and may be transferred securely if the child moves to another setting or school.

Escalation by Staff

- If a staff member feels a safeguarding concern has not been taken seriously or dealt with appropriately, they must escalate.
- Options include:
 - Directly contacting the Front Door Service.
 - Using the Whistleblowing Policy (NSPCC Helpline: 0800 028 0285).
 - Contacting Ofsted (0300 123 3155).

No member of staff will ever face disciplinary action for raising a safeguarding concern in good faith.

Confidentiality

- Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Safeguarding discussions must not take place in communal areas (staff room, corridor, playground).
- Parents are not informed of safeguarding referrals if doing so may increase risk.
- GDPR (2018) does not prevent sharing of safeguarding information – child protection always takes precedence.

Follow-Up and Support

- DSL ensures follow-up actions are completed and recorded.
- Staff directly involved in safeguarding cases will be supported through supervision and debriefs.



- Children will be supported sensitively, ensuring their well-being remains at the centre of all decisions.

Ongoing Monitoring

- DSL reviews safeguarding records regularly to identify patterns of concern (e.g., repeated absences, recurring injuries).
- Concerns are raised at staff safeguarding meetings (without breaching confidentiality).
- Action plans are agreed with relevant professionals where required.

7. Key Contacts

- Front Door Service / LADO: 0345 2000 109
- Emergency Duty Team: 0330 333 7475
- Emergency Services: 999 / 112
- MASH Advice Line: 0191 643 5555

Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers, or Students

At *Little Cygnets Childcare Ltd*, we take all allegations against staff extremely seriously. Allegations may relate to actions in the setting, online, or outside of work that suggest a person may pose a risk to children.

Step 1: Immediate Response

If an allegation is made that a member of staff, volunteer, student, or other adult working in the setting has:

- Harmed a child.
- Committed a criminal offence against a child.



- Behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

The following actions must be taken immediately:

- The staff member receiving the allegation must not investigate themselves.
- They must report directly to the DSL (Jessica Burns).
- If the allegation is against the DSL, it must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) directly.

Step 2: Ensuring Safety of Children

- The accused staff member is removed from direct contact with children immediately.
- Where necessary, the staff member may be suspended on a neutral basis until the allegation is resolved.
- A risk assessment will be carried out to ensure that children are protected from further harm.

Suspension is not an assumption of guilt but a protective measure for children, staff, and the investigation.

Step 3: Reporting to LADO

- The DSL or Manager will contact the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) within 24 hours of the allegation being made.
- The LADO will advise whether the case should be managed internally, referred to social care, or referred to the police.
- The DSL will record the LADO's advice and actions.



Contact details:

- LADO / Front Door Service: 0345 2000 109

Step 4: Notifying Ofsted

- Ofsted must be informed of all allegations against staff as soon as possible (no later than 14 days after the allegation).
- Notification will include:
 - Nature of the allegation.
 - Actions taken.
 - Involvement of external agencies (LADO, police, social care).

Step 5: Recording the Allegation

- A detailed, factual record of the allegation is made, including:
 - Date, time, and nature of allegation.
 - Exact words used where possible.
 - Actions taken and by whom.
 - Advice given by LADO or other agencies.
- Records are signed and dated by the person making them.
- Witnesses (if any) will be asked to provide written, signed statements with contact details.
- All records are stored securely in a locked filing cabinet separate from general child records.

Step 6: Investigation & Outcome



The investigation may involve:

- LADO and social care if safeguarding threshold is met.
- Police if a criminal offence may have been committed.
- Internal disciplinary investigation once external investigations are complete.

Possible outcomes include:

1. Substantiated – allegation is upheld, disciplinary action taken, referral to DBS/TRA (Teaching Regulation Agency) if required.
2. Unsubstantiated – insufficient evidence to prove or disprove, but concerns remain under review.
3. Unfounded – allegations found to be false or mistaken.
4. Malicious – allegation found to have been made with intent to cause harm; appropriate action taken.

All outcomes are shared with LADO and Ofsted.

Step 7: Supporting Staff and Children

- The accused staff member will be supported with clear communication, access to HR processes, and welfare support during suspension.
- Children involved will be supported sensitively and reassured by trusted adults.
- Parents will be informed of the allegation as advised by the LADO, unless doing so would place a child at risk.

Step 8: Learning & Review

- Once the case is concluded, management and DSL will conduct a review meeting to identify learning points.
- Policies and procedures will be updated if necessary.
- Training and supervision will reinforce staff awareness of professional boundaries.

Step 9: Whistleblowing Route

If staff feel that an allegation against a colleague is not being properly handled, they may escalate using:

- NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline: 0800 028 0285
- Ofsted: 0300 123 4666

We reduce safeguarding risks through:

- DBS checks & safer recruitment.
- Two staff present within sight/hearing at all times.
- Visitors supervised and logged.
- Family App used for accident/incident logging.
- Whistleblowing procedures actively promoted.

Additional Safeguarding Practices

- Absence Monitoring – daily registers checked, unexplained absences followed up, patterns monitored.
- Online Safety – no personal phones/devices on site except for managers as long as it does not interfere with care, secure storage of digital media using google workplace and only on nursery devices, staff trained in exploitation risks.



- Nutrition – healthy meals, allergies/intolerances monitored, menus shared with parents. See Nutrition Policy
- Toileting & Privacy – intimate care carried out respectfully by known suitable staff.
- Paediatric First Aid – all staff trained at the soonest opportunity , trainees not counted in ratios until trained.
- Multi-Agency Working – open collaboration with police, health, education, and social care.

Monitoring, Training & Review

- All staff receive induction safeguarding training before working with children.
- Regular refresher training (at least annually).
- DSLs attend advanced safeguarding training every 2 years.
- Policy reviewed annually and updated with new legislation.

Legislative Framework

This policy is underpinned by:

- EYFS Statutory Framework 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- Serious Crime Act 2015 (FGM Duty)



- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR)

Signed (Jessica Burns): *Jessica Burns*

Signed (Scott Marshall): *Scott Marshall*

Review Date: September 25