

Innsworth Preschool Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Commitment

1.1 Safeguarding Priority: At Innsworth Preschool, safeguarding is our highest priority. We are committed to protecting children from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and to promoting their welfare in line with all statutory requirements.

1.2 Precedence: This policy takes precedence over all other preschool policies, including those regarding confidentiality, complaints, and contractual terms, where a safeguarding concern exists. The safety of the child overrides all other considerations, including parental preference or commercial agreements.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Compliance: This policy is underpinned by and ensures compliance with the following key legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- The Children Acts 1989 and 2004.
- The Prevent Duty Guidance.
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.2 Guidance: We follow the procedures set out by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP) and apply local referral thresholds. We may also refer to *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) where relevant as good practice.

3. Definitions of Harm and Abuse

3.1 Categories: In accordance with statutory guidance, we recognise the four main categories of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, and Neglect.

3.2 Specific Risks: All staff are trained to recognise and respond to a wider range of specific safeguarding risks, including: Domestic Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Radicalisation and Extremism, and all forms of Child Exploitation (including Child-on-Child abuse). The DSL will follow statutory guidance and local procedures regarding these specific risks.

4. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

4.1 Appointment: Our appointed DSL is a senior staff member responsible for all safeguarding matters. The name and role of the DSL and any deputies are clearly displayed in the setting and included in the staff induction pack.

4.2 Training:

- **DSL/Deputies:** Undertake training in line with GSCP expectations and receive regular updates (e.g. annual briefings) to keep their knowledge current.
- **All Staff:** Receive safeguarding training that is updated at least every two years.

4.3 Responsibilities: The DSL liaises with local statutory children's services and the GSCP.

Responsibilities include managing referrals, maintaining secure records, and ensuring all staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training.

5. Staff Responsibilities

5.1 Duty of Care: All staff have a legal and professional duty to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect, report any concerns immediately to the DSL, maintain accurate and confidential records, and follow the Staff Code of Conduct at all times.

5.2 Smart Technology and Online Safety: To prevent the inadvertent recording of children and to minimise distraction, we operate strict controls on digital devices in line with EYFS requirements.

- **Personal Mobiles:** Prohibited in child-accessible areas.
- **Smartwatches:** Smartwatches with camera or recording capabilities are strictly prohibited in all child-accessible areas.
- **Online Safety:** Any digital devices used by children for learning (e.g. tablets) are strictly supervised and have appropriate filtering controls enabled. Staff are vigilant to the risks of children accessing inappropriate content online.
- **Social Media:** Staff must not engage with parents or children via personal social media platforms.

6. Early Help

6.1 Intervention: We are committed to early intervention. We identify concerns at an early stage, work in partnership with parents to provide support, and make referrals to Early Help services where appropriate to prevent issues from escalating.

7. Responding to Disclosures and Concerns

7.1 Handling Disclosures: If a child discloses abuse, staff will listen without judgment, avoid leading questions, and record the exact words used. They will not promise confidentiality but will reassure the child that they will get help.

7.2 The "Side-by-Side" Rule (Farm School Context): We recognise that the relaxed, outdoor nature of our Farm School activities often encourages children to talk more freely. Staff are trained to be particularly vigilant for disclosures during these quiet, reflective moments outdoors (e.g. feeding animals) and to follow standard recording procedures immediately afterwards.

7.3 Reporting Procedure: All concerns are reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL will assess the information and decide on the appropriate course of action, which may include monitoring, Early Help, or a formal referral to Children's Social Care.

7.4 Emergency Action: If a child is in immediate danger, or if the DSL is unavailable and a delay would place the child at risk, **any member of staff** has the authority and duty to contact Children's Social Care or the Police (999) directly. Authorisation is not required to save a child from immediate harm.

7.5 Parental Notification and Consent: We aim to work in partnership with parents and will usually inform them of referrals. However, **safeguarding overrides consent**. We will NOT seek consent or inform parents if doing so would:

- Place the child at increased risk of harm (e.g. in cases of sexual abuse or fabricated illness).
- Prejudice a police investigation.

8. Procedure for Unexplained or Prolonged Child Absence

8.1 Indicator of Concern: A child's welfare is paramount. Unexplained or prolonged absence can be a potential indicator of abuse.

8.2 Procedure:

- **Timely Contact:** If a child is absent without notification, a member of staff will attempt to contact the primary contact on the same day.
- **Escalation:** We exercise professional judgement regarding escalation. We will escalate sooner for vulnerable children or where there are concerning patterns of absence.
- **Action:** The DSL will attempt to contact emergency contacts. If risk is suspected, or contact cannot be made within a timeframe appropriate to the child's vulnerability, we may request a welfare check or make a formal referral to Children's Social Care.
- **Documentation:** All attempts at contact and outcomes are documented.

9. Allegations and Low-Level Concerns About Staff

9.1 Low-Level Concerns: We have a procedure for managing "low-level" concerns (behaviour that is unprofessional but does not meet the harm threshold). Staff must report such concerns to the Manager. These are recorded confidentially to identify patterns and prevent escalation.

9.2 Allegations of Harm: If an allegation is made that a staff member has harmed a child, or may have committed a criminal offence, or indicates they may pose a risk of harm:

- **Immediate Steps:** We will immediately remove the staff member from child contact (suspension), record the details, preserve evidence, and maintain confidentiality. Suspension is a neutral act, not an admission of guilt.
- **Reporting:** We will report immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day.
- **Ofsted Notification:** We will notify Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises within 14 days. Failure to do so without reasonable excuse is an offence.
- **Referral:** We will refer to Children's Social Care and/or the Police as required by the LADO.

10. Safer Recruitment

10.1 Process: We follow a strict, robust safer recruitment process compliant with the EYFS:

- **Training:** At least one panel member holds a valid Safer Recruitment certificate.
- **Checks:** Includes Enhanced DBS, Barred List checks, and identity verification.
- **Online Searches:** Conducted for all shortlisted candidates.
- **References:** Sought directly from the referee and scrutinised prior to interview.

11. Specific Safeguarding Issues

11.1 Initiatives:

- **Operation Encompass:** Where Operation Encompass (or equivalent) information-sharing regarding domestic abuse is available to early years providers locally, we will engage and follow the protocol.
- **Prevent Duty:** Staff are trained to recognise signs of radicalisation. Concerns regarding radicalisation will be referred to the Channel panel or local police Prevent team as appropriate.
- **Child-on-Child Abuse:** All allegations of abuse between children are investigated and supported appropriately.

12. Contextual Safeguarding

12.1 Local Risks: Safeguarding extends beyond our gates. We regularly assess local risks (e.g. traffic safety, activity in local parks) that may affect children as they arrive or leave. We share relevant intelligence with the Police and local schools.

13. Whistleblowing

13.1 Reporting: All staff are expected to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice. Whistleblowers are protected under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Concerns should be reported to the Manager, DSL, or directly to the LADO or Ofsted.

14. Record Keeping Standards

14.1 Integrity: Safeguarding records are vital evidence.

- **Content:** Staff record concerns contemporaneously, using the child's words where relevant. Records must be factual, dated, signed (or digitally attributable), and clearly distinguish between fact and opinion.
- **Chronology:** Management maintains a clear chronology of significant events.
- **Original Notes:** Original notes must never be altered or deleted.

14.2 Storage & Transfer: Safeguarding records are stored securely and separately from the child's general file. Access is restricted to the DSL and Manager. When a child moves setting, safeguarding records are transferred securely to the new DSL, separate from general learning records.

15. External Safeguarding Contacts

15.1 Reference: Contact details for the following are included in the policy appendix and clearly displayed for all staff:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy
- Gloucestershire MASH / Children's Social Care
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Police (Non-emergency and 999)
- Ofsted

16. Policy Review

16.1 Review: This policy is reviewed at least annually or immediately following any serious incident or change in legislation.

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