

Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy



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Policy Statement

At Forest & Play, we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. We believe every child has the right to grow, learn and develop in a safe, secure, nurturing and inclusive environment.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The welfare of the child is paramount and all staff have a duty to remain vigilant, act promptly on concerns and work together to protect children from harm.

As a small Forest School provision, we recognise that strong relationships with children and families place us in a unique position to identify concerns early. We actively promote a culture of openness, vigilance, professional curiosity and respectful challenge where concerns are shared and acted upon without delay.

We follow statutory guidance including:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS 2025)
- Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures

Our Safeguarding Principles

At Forest & Play:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- All children have the right to protection from abuse and neglect.
- Concerns will always be taken seriously.
- Early intervention and early help are essential.

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- We work in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies.
- We promote a culture where staff feel confident to raise concerns.
- We use professional curiosity to understand children's lived experiences.
- We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, neglect and unsafe practice.

Professional Curiosity

Professional curiosity is a key part of safeguarding practice at Forest & Play.

Professional curiosity means looking beyond what is immediately seen or heard, asking respectful questions, noticing changes and seeking to understand a child's experiences and circumstances.

All staff will:

- Notice changes in behaviour, appearance, attendance, presentation and wellbeing.
- Remain alert to patterns and emerging concerns.
- Listen carefully to children and families.
- Ask appropriate questions when concerns arise.
- Record observations accurately and objectively.
- Share concerns promptly with the DSL.
- Avoid making assumptions or accepting explanations at face value.

We recognise that safeguarding concerns are not always obvious and that effective safeguarding relies upon practitioners remaining professionally curious and maintaining a child-centred approach at all times.

Staff are encouraged to seek advice from the DSL whenever they are unsure whether a concern meets the threshold for referral. It is always better to seek guidance than overlook a potential safeguarding concern.



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Using the Buckinghamshire Continuum of Need

Forest & Play is committed to identifying concerns as early as possible and ensuring children and families receive the right support at the right time.

When concerns arise, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will use the Buckinghamshire Continuum of Need alongside professional judgement to help determine the most appropriate course of action.

Depending on the level of concern, this may include:

- Continuing to monitor and support the child within the setting.
- Working with parents and carers to provide Early Help.
- Seeking advice from First Response.
- Making a referral to Children's Social Care where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The Continuum of Need supports decision-making but does not replace professional curiosity or safeguarding responsibilities. Where there is immediate risk of significant harm, a referral will be made without delay.

Safeguarding Culture

Forest & Play promotes a safeguarding culture where:

- Children feel safe, valued and listened to.
- Staff are confident to raise concerns.
- Concerns are acted upon promptly.
- Low-level concerns are shared openly.
- Professional challenge is encouraged where appropriate.
- Safeguarding is discussed regularly through supervision and team meetings.
- Learning from incidents and reviews informs practice.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Rebecca Abery

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (Deputy DSL): Louise May

In the unlikely event the above DSLs are not present due to unforeseen circumstances Tracey Doidge will be available for any safeguarding concerns

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The DSL and Deputy DSL have completed appropriate safeguarding training and undertake regular updates to ensure their knowledge and practice remain current and effective.

Details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Support will be clearly displayed on the parent and visitor notice board and made available to all staff, volunteers and families so that everyone knows who to contact should they have a safeguarding concern.

A Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will always be present during operating hours.

The DSL has overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the provision and will provide advice, guidance and support to practitioners when concerns arise.

If a practitioner feels unable to raise a safeguarding concern with the DSL, Deputy DSL or Director, or believes that appropriate action has not been taken, they must not delay in seeking advice or making a referral themselves. Practitioners may contact Children's Social Care, First Response, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line, or the Police directly where appropriate. The welfare and safety of the child will always take priority.

Concerns About a Member of Staff, Volunteer or Contractor

Forest & Play takes all concerns about the conduct, behaviour or suitability of staff, volunteers and contractors seriously.

Any concern that a member of staff, volunteer or contractor has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children; or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children,

must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Director.

Where the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported directly to the Director. Where the concern relates to the Director, advice will be sought directly from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

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Staff must not investigate allegations themselves, discuss concerns with colleagues unnecessarily, or delay reporting concerns. All allegations and concerns will be managed confidentially and in accordance with local safeguarding procedures and guidance from the LADO.

Responsibilities of the DSL

The DSL is responsible for:

- Acting as the lead professional for safeguarding within Forest & Play.
- Supporting staff with safeguarding concerns and decision making.
- Maintaining safeguarding records.
- Making referrals to Buckinghamshire First Response, Children's Social Care, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Ofsted, the Police and other relevant safeguarding agencies where appropriate.
- Monitoring safeguarding practice.
- Providing safeguarding advice and guidance to staff.
- Liaising with external agencies.
- Ensuring safeguarding policies remain current and effective.
- Ensuring safeguarding training remains up to date.

The DSL does not investigate allegations of abuse. Investigations are undertaken by the appropriate statutory agencies.

Support for Staff

Forest & Play recognises that safeguarding concerns can be distressing and challenging for staff. The DSL and Deputy DSL are available to provide advice, guidance and support whenever safeguarding concerns arise.

The DSL will support practitioners to:

- Recognise and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.
- Understand reporting procedures and statutory responsibilities.
- Complete safeguarding records and referrals accurately.



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- Record factual information clearly and objectively.
- Liaise with external agencies where required.
- Access additional support following safeguarding incidents.

Where a practitioner requires assistance in completing a safeguarding report, the DSL may provide guidance and support with recording information. However, all records must remain an accurate and factual account of what was observed, heard or disclosed and must not be amended in a way that changes the practitioner's original account.

The DSL will foster a culture where staff feel confident to seek advice, ask questions, exercise professional curiosity and raise concerns without fear of criticism or judgement.

Safeguarding Training

All staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and before working unsupervised with children.

Safeguarding knowledge is continually developed through:

- Staff meetings
- Supervision sessions
- Policy reviews
- Safeguarding discussions
- Professional development opportunities

Formal safeguarding training will be **refreshed annually**.

DSL and Deputy DSL training will be renewed annually or in accordance with local safeguarding requirements.

All staff receive regular safeguarding updates to ensure knowledge remains current.

Safeguarding Within the Forest School Environment

Due to the nature of outdoor learning, additional safeguarding measures are in place.

We ensure:

- Children remain within established woodland boundaries.
- A daily opening, closing and safety sweep of the site.

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- Children are always within sight or sound of a suitably deployed practitioner.
- Staff are deployed effectively throughout the site.
- Regular headcounts are undertaken.
- We are continuously looking at safety and will complete a dynamic risk assessment as required.
- Communication systems including walkie-talkies, whistles and howler system remain available at all times.
- Collection procedures are robust and secure.
- Higher-risk activities are subject to enhanced supervision where required.

Safeguarding considerations form part of all activities, routines and risk assessments.

Recognising Abuse and Neglect

Abuse may be physical, emotional or sexual in nature, or may involve neglect. Children may also experience harm through domestic abuse, exploitation, online abuse, peer-on-peer abuse, radicalisation, contextual safeguarding risks or other forms of harm.

Categories of Abuse

Forest & Play recognises the four categories of abuse as defined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*:

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

Emotional abuse – the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. This may include conveying that a child is worthless or unloved, exposing them to domestic abuse, or causing them to feel frightened or in danger.

Sexual abuse – forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. This includes both contact and non-contact abuse, including online abuse and exploitation.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect can occur in any family, regardless of income, education, background or social circumstances. Staff will remain professionally curious and avoid making assumptions based on a family's

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appearance, lifestyle or financial situation, instead focusing on the child's lived experience and individual needs.

Abuse and neglect may occur in isolation or in combination, and children may experience multiple forms of harm at the same time. Staff will remain professionally curious, remain vigilant to the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect, and report any concerns immediately in accordance with this policy.

Children at Increased Risk

Staff understand that children may be at increased risk of harm where there are co-occurring factors such as domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and substance misuse, together with other safeguarding concerns including exploitation, online abuse and radicalisation. Practitioners will remain professionally curious and consider the cumulative impact that these factors may have on a child's safety and wellbeing.

Indicators of abuse may include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Significant changes in behaviour
- Withdrawal or anxiety
- Delayed development
- Poor attendance
- Poor hygiene or unmet basic needs
- Age-inappropriate sexual knowledge or behaviour
- Changes in emotional wellbeing
- Concerning disclosures made by a child
- Changes in family circumstances affecting welfare

The presence of one indicator does not necessarily mean abuse has occurred; however, staff should remain professionally curious and report concerns in accordance with this policy.

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Prevent Duty

Forest & Play recognises its responsibility under the Prevent Duty to safeguard children from the risk of radicalisation and exposure to extremist views. We understand that protecting children from radicalisation is part of our wider safeguarding responsibilities.

We are committed to:

- Providing a safe and inclusive environment where children feel valued, respected and able to express their views.
- Promoting children's wellbeing, resilience, confidence and critical thinking skills through positive relationships and experiences.
- Ensuring all staff understand their responsibilities under the Prevent Duty and receive appropriate safeguarding and Prevent awareness training.
- Identifying and responding appropriately to concerns that a child, family member or other individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation or extremist influences.
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and external agencies where concerns arise.

Any concerns relating to radicalisation, extremism or behaviours that may indicate vulnerability to extremist influences will be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will follow safeguarding procedures and seek advice or make referrals where appropriate.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. It involves procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

FGM is illegal in the UK and is recognised as a serious safeguarding issue that can have significant physical, emotional and psychological consequences.

Forest & Play recognises its responsibility to safeguard children who may be at risk of FGM. Practitioners will remain vigilant to possible indicators that a child may be at risk or may have been affected by FGM.

Potential indicators may include:

- A family originating from a community known to practise FGM.
- Discussions about a special ceremony or planned extended holiday abroad.

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- A child or family member expressing concern about a forthcoming trip.
- Changes in behaviour, wellbeing or presentation that give cause for concern.

Staff will never assume that a child is at risk based solely on their culture, ethnicity, religion or background.

Any concerns relating to FGM must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will follow local safeguarding procedures and seek advice or make referrals to Children's Social Care, the Police or other relevant agencies where appropriate.

FGM concerns will be treated as a child protection matter and managed in accordance with the setting's safeguarding procedures.

Further guidance can be obtained from the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and national safeguarding guidance.

Promoting Fundamental British Values

Forest & Play actively promotes the Fundamental British Values of Democracy, Rule of Law, Individual Liberty, Mutual Respect and Tolerance through everyday experiences, relationships and our nature-based curriculum.

Democracy

Children are encouraged to make choices, express their views, contribute ideas and participate in decisions appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Rule of Law

Children learn the importance of rules, boundaries and keeping themselves and others safe. Through consistent expectations and positive role modelling, children develop an understanding of responsibility and consequences.

Individual Liberty

Children are supported to make choices, develop independence, take appropriate risks and build confidence through child-led exploration and learning.

Mutual Respect

Children are encouraged to respect themselves, others, resources and the natural environment. Practitioners model positive relationships and support children to develop empathy, kindness and consideration.

Tolerance and Inclusion

We celebrate diversity and welcome children and families from all backgrounds, cultures,

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faiths and beliefs. Children are encouraged to understand and value differences and to treat others with fairness and respect.

Any discriminatory, prejudicial or extremist language, attitudes or behaviour will be challenged appropriately and addressed in line with our safeguarding and behaviour management procedures.

Through our woodland environment and positive relationships, Forest & Play aims to develop confident, respectful and resilient children who are prepared for life in modern Britain.

Reporting Concerns

Any safeguarding concern, disclosure, allegation, observation, low-level concern or welfare concern must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

Staff must:

- Listen carefully and remain calm.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking.
- Never promise confidentiality.
- Record concerns accurately and factually.
- Use the child's own words wherever possible.
- Sign and date all records.
- Report concerns without delay.

If a child is believed to be at immediate risk of harm, emergency services will be contacted immediately and the DSL informed as soon as possible.

No member of staff should assume somebody else has reported a concern.

Referrals to First Response

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will review all safeguarding concerns and use professional judgement, alongside the Buckinghamshire Continuum of Need where appropriate, to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Where a child may be at risk of significant harm, or the threshold for statutory intervention is met, the DSL will contact Buckinghamshire First Response for advice and/or make a referral without delay.

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Parents will normally be informed before a referral is made unless doing so would place the child or another person at increased risk or could compromise a police or safeguarding investigation.

All safeguarding concerns, decisions, discussions and referrals will be accurately recorded and stored securely in accordance with data protection requirements.

Low-Level Concerns

Forest & Play recognises the importance of identifying and addressing low-level concerns.

A low-level concern is any behaviour that may be inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct but does not meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

All staff are expected to:

- Share concerns promptly.
- Self-report where appropriate.
- Contribute to a culture of openness and transparency.

Low-level concerns will be recorded, reviewed and monitored to identify patterns or emerging risks.

Confidentiality

Information relating to safeguarding concerns will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

The protection of children will always take precedence over issues of confidentiality.

All safeguarding records will be accurate, factual, securely stored and retained in accordance with statutory requirements.

Whistleblowing

All staff have a duty to report concerns about unsafe, poor or inappropriate practice.

Where staff feel unable to raise concerns internally, they may contact Children's Social Care, Ofsted, the NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline or the Police.

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No member of staff will suffer detriment for raising a genuine safeguarding concern.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes.
- Safeguarding guidance changes.
- Local safeguarding procedures change.
- An incident identifies the need for review.
- Learning from safeguarding practice requires amendment.

Useful contacts

Setting	
Main office	07763 505 992
DSL	Becca Abery
Deputy DSL	Louise May
Alternative DSL if DSL or DDSL unavailable	Tracey Doidge
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Phone: 01296 382070 Email: lado@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
First Response Team (Buckingham Safeguarding Children Partnership)	Phone (First Response Team): 01296 383962 Email: Secure- cypfirestresponse@buckinghamshire.gov.uk Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team Phone: 0800 999 7677
Ofsted (England)	0300 123 1231
Whistleblowing Line	0800 028 0285 or help@nspcc.org.uk available 08.00 – 20.00 Monday to Friday

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Police and related contacts	
Emergency police	999
Non-emergency police	101
Thames Valley Police Prevent Team	Preventreferrals@thamesvalley.police.uk or call 101 & ask for the branch sergeant
Protect Advise Line	020 3117 2520 or whistle@protect-advice.org.uk available 09.00 – 17.30 Monday to Friday
Child exploitation and online protection (CEOP)	Online contact only
DfE counter-extremism helpline	020 7340 7264

Other useful contacts	
Anti-terrorist hotline	0800 789 321
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111
Kidscape	020 7823 5430
National Domestic Abuse helpline	0808 2000 247
Modern slavery helpline	08000 121 700
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)	01223 20 30 30
Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	0303 123 1113

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This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of Forest & Play	Date for review
8 th July 2026	Tracey Doidge	8 th July 2027