

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Purpose of This Policy

Hearth Childcare is committed to protecting and promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of every child receiving care.

This Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy explains how Hearth Childcare identifies, prevents and responds to safeguarding concerns, allegations, disclosures, accidents, injuries, unsafe situations and other circumstances that may place a child at risk.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Hearth Childcare will take concerns seriously and will act in accordance with current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures.

This policy applies to all children receiving care through Hearth Childcare.

Hearth Childcare's Safeguarding Commitment

Hearth Childcare aims to provide childcare that is:

- safe;
- respectful;
- inclusive;
- child-centred;
- age-appropriate;
- responsive to individual needs;
- supportive of children's emotional and physical wellbeing.

Children will be treated with dignity, patience and respect.

Hearth Childcare recognises that children communicate in different ways and that safeguarding concerns may present differently depending on a child's age, development, communication abilities, disability or individual circumstances.

Where a child has additional needs, including SEN or neurodivergent needs, safeguarding arrangements will take their individual communication and support needs into account.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

As the sole childcare provider, I am responsible for maintaining appropriate safeguarding arrangements within Hearth Childcare.

I will:

- maintain appropriate safeguarding knowledge and training;
- follow relevant legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures;
- remain alert to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns;
- respond appropriately to disclosures;
- record concerns factually and promptly;
- seek advice from children's social care, the police, LADO or another appropriate

professional where necessary;

- share information where there is a lawful and safeguarding-related reason to do so;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- prioritise the child's safety and welfare.

Recognising Abuse, Neglect and Safeguarding Concerns

Hearth Childcare recognises that safeguarding concerns can take many forms, including:

- physical abuse;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect;
- domestic abuse;
- coercive or controlling behaviour;
- child sexual exploitation;
- criminal or sexual exploitation;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- online abuse;
- bullying;
- radicalisation or exploitation;
- trafficking and modern slavery;
- female genital mutilation;
- forced marriage;
- serious violence;
- abuse or neglect arising from a child's vulnerability or additional needs.

A safeguarding concern does not need to involve an obvious injury or immediate danger.

Changes in behaviour, emotional presentation, communication, appearance, attendance, relationships or general wellbeing may also cause concern.

Hearth Childcare will not make assumptions or attempt to diagnose abuse. Where there is a concern, appropriate safeguarding advice will be sought.

Responding to a Child Who Discloses Something

If a child tells me something that may indicate abuse, neglect or another safeguarding concern, I will:

- remain calm;
- listen carefully;
- allow the child to speak in their own words;
- avoid asking leading or unnecessary questions;
- not promise to keep the information secret;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling me;
- explain, where appropriate, that I may need to tell someone who can help keep them safe;
- make a factual record of what was said as soon as reasonably possible;
- seek appropriate safeguarding advice or make a referral where necessary.

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

The child's words will be recorded as accurately as possible rather than replacing them with assumptions or interpretations.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Where I have a safeguarding concern about a child, I will consider the appropriate action based on the seriousness and circumstances of the concern.

This may include seeking advice from:

- the relevant local authority children's social care service;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where the concern relates to an adult working with children;
- the police;
- another appropriate safeguarding professional or agency.

If a child is in immediate danger, I will contact the emergency services by calling 999.

I will not delay taking appropriate action simply because I have not been able to contact a parent or guardian.

Allegations or Concerns About Hearth Childcare

Hearth Childcare recognises that an allegation or concern may be raised about the childcare provider, including an allegation that I have harmed a child, behaved inappropriately, breached professional boundaries or otherwise acted in a way that may have placed a child at risk.

An allegation will be taken seriously without automatically assuming that the allegation is true.

I will not attempt to privately investigate, disprove or resolve an allegation where it may require safeguarding, police or LADO involvement.

Where an allegation is made, I will:

- make a factual, dated record;
- preserve relevant records, messages, photographs or other information;
- avoid altering or deleting potentially relevant evidence;
- avoid questioning a child or potential witness in a way that could interfere with an investigation;
- seek appropriate professional advice;
- cooperate with any safeguarding, police or LADO process;
- maintain confidentiality and share information only where necessary and lawful.

Pre-existing Injuries or Conditions

Where a child has an injury, mark, bruise, illness or other physical condition before a childcare session begins, parents/guardians are encouraged to tell me at handover.

Where appropriate, I may make a factual record of a pre-existing injury or condition, including its location and appearance, and record information provided by the parent/guardian.

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

This helps protect the child and all parties by creating an accurate record of the child's condition before care begins.

If a concern is subsequently raised about an injury, relevant factual records may be provided to the appropriate safeguarding authority or other relevant professional where necessary.

The existence or absence of a record does not by itself determine whether an allegation is true or false. This is for the appropriate safeguarding or investigative authority to establish.

The Child's Home and Physical Safety

Because Hearth Childcare takes place in the child's own home, parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that the home is reasonably safe and suitable for childcare.

Parents/guardians should disclose any known household hazards or circumstances that could affect the child's safety.

During a session, I will take reasonable steps to identify and manage hazards that become apparent.

If I consider the environment to present an immediate or serious risk to the child's safety, I may pause or end the childcare session.

Household Security

Once the parent/guardian or responsible adult has left and childcare has begun, the front door will be locked where appropriate to reduce the risk of the child leaving the property unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access.

If I have not been informed that a visitor is expected, I will not routinely open the door to an unexpected visitor while I am solely responsible for the child.

If someone arrives unexpectedly, I will prioritise the child's safety and may communicate with the person without allowing them into the property.

Parents/guardians should inform Hearth Childcare in advance about expected visitors who may be present during a childcare session.

This does not prevent appropriate action being taken where emergency assistance is required.

Intimate Care, Nappy Changing and Personal Care

Where a child requires nappy changing, toileting, dressing or other personal care, Hearth Childcare will provide this respectfully and in accordance with the child's age, developmental stage, communication abilities and individual needs.

Where appropriate, I will:

- explain what is going to happen before beginning;
- ask for the child's cooperation;
- use age-appropriate language to explain what I am doing;

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

- give reasonable choices where possible;
- encourage the child to communicate if they are uncomfortable;
- maintain the child's dignity and privacy;
- avoid unnecessary exposure;
- use only the level of physical contact required to provide the care.

For babies and children who cannot meaningfully communicate or provide verbal agreement, I will respond appropriately to their developmental cues and behaviour.

Parents/guardians should provide information about the child's normal personal-care routines through the Getting to Know Your Child process.

Health, Illness, Injuries and Emergencies

Hearth Childcare will follow the relevant health and safety arrangements set out in the Terms & Conditions.

If a child becomes seriously unwell or is involved in a medical emergency, I will seek appropriate emergency assistance.

Medication

Hearth Childcare does not routinely administer medication.

In an emergency, I will contact the appropriate emergency services and follow their instructions.

Parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as reasonably possible.

Any medication information provided to Hearth Childcare will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Policy.

Accidents and injuries

Accidents, injuries or significant incidents occurring during a session will be recorded appropriately and communicated to the parent/guardian as soon as reasonably appropriate.

Where appropriate, parents/guardians may be asked to acknowledge that they have been informed of the record.

Where an accident, injury or incident raises a safeguarding concern, Hearth Childcare will follow the procedures set out in this policy and seek appropriate advice or make referrals where necessary.

Parents, Handovers and Family Start

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing accurate and up-to-date information about their child.

This includes information that may affect the child's:

- safety;

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

- health;
- emotional wellbeing;
- communication;
- dietary requirements;
- routines;
- additional needs;
- emergency arrangements.

Family Start

The Hearth Family Start is the first introductory session only and is provided with a parent or responsible adult present throughout.

The Family Start is not a recurring requirement and does not need to be repeated simply because a family has not booked for a period of time.

If the parent or responsible adult leaves during the Family Start without informing Hearth Childcare:

- I will attempt to contact them immediately;
- I will not leave the child unattended;
- I will remain with the child while attempting to contact the parent/responsible adult;
- if the parent/responsible adult cannot be contacted, or the circumstances raise a safeguarding concern, I will seek appropriate assistance from the relevant safeguarding authority or police;
- the circumstances will be recorded as an incident.

Hearth Childcare reserves the right to terminate the Family Start and end the agreement with the family with immediate effect where a parent or responsible adult leaves the child without the provider's knowledge or otherwise seriously breaches the Family Start conditions.

Where appropriate, Hearth Childcare may decline to accept further bookings from the family following a serious breach of the Family Start conditions.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Hearth Childcare respects the privacy of children and families.

Information will normally be kept confidential and handled in accordance with the Hearth Childcare Privacy Policy.

However, confidentiality does not prevent information from being shared where there is a lawful and appropriate safeguarding reason.

Information may be shared with children's social care, police, healthcare professionals or another appropriate safeguarding authority where necessary to protect a child or another person.

Only information that is relevant and necessary will be shared wherever possible.

Allegations, Incidents and Communication With Parents

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Parents/guardians will normally be informed of significant safeguarding incidents or concerns relating to their child where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Hearth Childcare recognises that parents and carers need relevant information to help keep their child safe.

However, information may be withheld or delayed where advised by children's social care, the police, LADO or another safeguarding authority, including where disclosure could:

- place a child or another person at greater risk;
- compromise a safeguarding assessment;
- compromise a police investigation;
- interfere with evidence.

Photography, Media and Online Safety

No photographs or videos of a child will be taken or shared without appropriate parental/guardian consent.

Consent for photographs used for daily updates is separate from consent for photographs used for:

- the Hearth Childcare website;
- advertising;
- Facebook or other social media.

Parents/guardians will be asked to provide appropriate consent before photographs are used publicly.

Consent can be withdrawn subject to any legal or practical limitations.

Daily update photographs will be deleted from the provider's device after they have been sent to the parent/guardian, in accordance with Hearth Childcare's stated media arrangements.

Professional Boundaries

Hearth Childcare maintains professional boundaries with children and families.

I will:

- treat children respectfully;
- use age-appropriate communication;
- maintain appropriate physical boundaries;
- avoid unnecessary physical contact;
- avoid inappropriate or secretive communication;
- respect children's privacy;
- avoid favouritism;
- maintain appropriate relationships with parents and guardians.

Children will not be encouraged to keep secrets from their parents or trusted adults.

Equality, Inclusion and Additional Needs

Hearth Childcare aims to provide inclusive care for all children.

Children will not be treated less favourably because of characteristics protected by law, disability, additional needs, developmental differences or communication style.

Safeguarding arrangements will take account of the fact that some children may:

- communicate differently;
- have difficulty recognising unsafe situations;
- be more reliant on adults;
- have sensory or emotional needs;
- have difficulty disclosing concerns;
- require additional support to understand boundaries.

Concerns About Safeguarding Practice

If a parent or other person has a concern about Hearth Childcare's safeguarding practice, they are encouraged to raise it with the provider in the first instance where appropriate.

However, a person does not need to raise a concern with Hearth Childcare before contacting children's social care, the police, LADO or another appropriate safeguarding authority if they believe a child may be at risk.

Recording and Record Keeping

Hearth Childcare will maintain appropriate records relating to safeguarding, incidents, accidents, injuries, concerns and relevant training.

Records will be:

- factual;
- accurate;
- dated;
- stored securely;
- accessible only where there is an appropriate reason;
- retained in accordance with applicable legal, safeguarding, insurance and data-protection requirements.

Safeguarding records will not be altered in a way that removes the original information.

Where a correction is required, this will be handled appropriately so that the original record remains traceable.

Further information about personal-data handling is provided in the Hearth Childcare Privacy Policy.

Safeguarding Training and Professional Development

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

Hearth Childcare maintains up-to-date safeguarding knowledge and training appropriate to the role.

Records of completed and updated training will be retained, including where appropriate:

- training title;
- completion date;
- renewal/review date;
- certificate or other evidence of completion.

Safeguarding knowledge will be reviewed when relevant legislation, statutory guidance or local safeguarding procedures change.

Allegations and Safeguarding Referrals Involving the Provider

Where an allegation is made about Hearth Childcare, I will follow the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) procedure and any instructions provided by children's social care or police.

I will not conduct my own investigation where doing so could interfere with an official safeguarding or police process.

I will cooperate fully with relevant authorities.

Visitors and Other Adults

No unauthorised person will knowingly be permitted to have access to a child during a Hearth Childcare session.

Where other adults are present in the child's home during childcare, appropriate consideration will be given to the child's safety and professional boundaries.

Parents/guardians should inform Hearth Childcare about planned visitors or other circumstances that may affect who is present during a session.

Emergency Situations

In an emergency, the child's immediate safety takes priority.

Depending on the circumstances, I may:

- contact 999;
- request an ambulance, police or fire service;
- follow instructions given by emergency professionals;
- contact the parent/guardian;
- provide appropriate first aid within my training;
- accompany or remain with the child where appropriate;
- provide relevant information to emergency professionals.

Missing Child or Unauthorised Absence

If a child is unexpectedly missing from the area in which they are being cared for, I will take immediate reasonable steps to locate the child and assess the circumstances.

Where there is a risk that the child has left the property or cannot be located promptly, I will contact the police and/or emergency services as appropriate.

Parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as reasonably possible, unless doing so would be inappropriate on safeguarding grounds.

Safer Working Practice

Hearth Childcare recognises that safeguarding includes preventing situations where misunderstandings, unsafe practices or poor professional boundaries could arise.

I will:

- maintain clear professional boundaries;
- keep appropriate records;
- communicate with parents through agreed communication channels;
- avoid unnecessary private communication with children;
- use age-appropriate language;
- respect children's personal space;
- follow the child's agreed routines where appropriate;
- raise concerns rather than ignoring them.

Policy Breaches and Ending Services

A serious safeguarding concern or serious breach of Hearth Childcare's safeguarding arrangements may result in a childcare session being ended immediately.

Hearth Childcare may also terminate an agreement with a family where continuing to provide care would present an unacceptable safeguarding, safety or professional risk.

Where appropriate, Hearth Childcare may decline to accept future bookings from a family.

Where a safeguarding authority, police officer or other appropriate professional provides instructions concerning a safeguarding matter, Hearth Childcare will follow those instructions.

Relevant Legislation and Guidance

Hearth Childcare's safeguarding arrangements are informed by current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures applicable to its role in England.

These include, where relevant:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Children's Social Care National Framework
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Hearth Childcare | Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

relevant DBS and safer-working legislation and guidance;

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR

relevant guidance concerning domestic abuse, exploitation, trafficking, FGM, forced marriage, radicalisation, online safety and other safeguarding risks;

relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures.

The current Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 statutory guidance was updated on 18 March 2026 and applies to childcare settings in England.

Hearth Childcare will review relevant guidance when changes occur.

Local Safeguarding Contacts

Bristol

For concerns about a child's welfare, abuse or neglect.

Bristol First Response - 0117 903 6444

For urgent children's social-care concerns outside normal working hours.

Emergency Duty Team - 01454 615 165

Immediate danger - 999

Bristol currently directs professionals to make safeguarding referrals through First Response by telephone during its published working hours.

South Gloucestershire

Children's Social Care - 01454 866000

Out of hours/weekends - 01454 615165

Immediate danger - 999

LADO - 01454 868508

South Gloucestershire identifies the LADO as the contact for allegations concerning adults who work or volunteer with children.

Bath & North East Somerset

Children's Social Care - 01225 396111 / 01225 477929

Out of hours - 01454 615165

Immediate danger - 999

LADO - 01225 396810, LADO@bathnes.gov.uk

These are the currently published B&NES safeguarding contacts.

Other Local Authorities

Where a family lives outside the areas listed above, Hearth Childcare will use the safeguarding and children's social-care contact arrangements for the local authority relevant to the child and family.

Review of This Policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where necessary, including following:

- changes to legislation;
- changes to statutory guidance;
- changes to local safeguarding procedures;
- significant safeguarding incidents;
- changes to the services provided by Hearth Childcare;
- learning from safeguarding concerns or incidents.

The latest version of this policy will be made available to parents/guardians.

Last Updated: August 2026

Next Review: January 2027 (Yearly)