AUTUMN COTTAGE CHILDCARE

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Issued: September 2026 ***Next Review: April 2027***

INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding and Child Protection are two branches of the same tree, namely promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

- ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment

Child Protection focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, including procedures for responding to concerns about a child.

AC is committed to building a culture of safety in which children are protected from abuse and harm.

STRUCTURE

This Policy is in two parts and should be read in conjunction with the Health & Safety and Privacy Policies:

- Part A - Provisions for Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Part B - What happens when abuse is suspected
- Part C- Information Sharing: Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

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PART A - PROVISIONS FOR SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

Safeguarding Leads

- There are four designated Lead Practitioners for Safeguarding (LPS); a Lead and Deputy Lead. At the time of writing, they are:
  Lead: Kelly Smith, Manager
  Deputy Lead: Laurna Hunt, Alison Bedford, Emily Ward and Michelle Williams
- Lead Practitioners have responsibility for safeguarding children and for keeping staff updated and fully aware of what to do should they have any concerns.

Staffing

See Staffing Policy.

Prospective staff:

- AC seek 'Enhanced disclosure' through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for those who will have regular contact with the children.
- AC ensure all new staff are appropriately vetted through the Safer Recruitment Process. This includes the acquisition of at least two references during the onboarding process.
- Must disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings. Staff are required to sign a declaration at least every 6 months, kept in their staff records.
- AC ensure that all qualifications listed on application forms are checked with the Children, Young People and Families Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to ensure they are approved childcare courses.
- AC provide clear expectations in relation to their behaviour.

Staff Supervision

- Staff receive regular supervision, including discussion of any safeguarding issues; their performance and learning needs are reviewed regularly.
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised at any time.
- AC ensures that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at AC or has access to the children.

Staff medication/other substances

- Staff must disclose any medication being taken. AC may request a supporting letter from their GP stating that this will not affect their ability to care for children.
- Staff must never be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children.

Staff Training

- The designated LDAs undertake Level 4 Safeguarding training, refreshed every 2 years. They are responsible for:
  - offering support, advice and guidance to staff
  - ensuring staff are fully aware of the safeguarding policies and procedures
  - liaison with local statutory children's services agencies and with the LSCB.
- Safeguarding awareness and child protection is part of the staff Induction process
- All staff complete Safeguarding training at Level 3, refreshed every 2 years, provided by an approved training provider. Staff will also be required to complete termly Safeguarding updates during staff meetings, during 1:1 supervisions and/or online training platforms.
- New information / industry thinking regarding safeguarding is shared/discussed at staff meetings and during staff supervisions.
- Further targeted training ensures:
  - Prevent Duty

- Staff are up to date with current safeguarding policy and procedures, with special emphasis on identifying signs of possible abuse / neglect and responding in an appropriate way.
- Staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns, including relevant external agencies.
- Staff have a good knowledge of the Whistle blowing procedure and are confident to follow this process.
- How to identify extra-familial threats such as online risks, radicalisation and grooming
- How to identify and respond to families who may need early help and organisational safeguarding procedures.

Staff Awareness

- **'One to One' Supervision meetings**
  Held each term as part of support and supervision. These meetings:
  - discuss any issues, particularly concerning a child's development or well-being.
  - for existing concerns, allow reflection on the established action plan and any outcomes
  - evaluate the plan's effectiveness in relation to safeguarding this child.
  - allow discussions regarding staff personal effectiveness.
- **Staff Meetings**
  - Staff are kept updated on information made aware to the Lead Practitioners through Staff Meetings. This includes factors such as abuse of disabled children, fabricated or induced illness, and Female Genital Mutilation.
- **General awareness through Training**
  - understanding the thresholds of significant harm
  - significant changes in a child's behaviour or deterioration in general wellbeing,
  - unexplained bruising and marks and other signs
  - children's comments giving cause for concern,
  - inappropriate behaviour displayed by other members of staff, or any person working with the children.
  - how to access services for families, including those who are below the threshold for significant harm, according to LSCB and others.
- **Prevent**
  - Prevent Duty information - even young children can be drawn into radicalisation/terrorism.
  - Promotion of Fundamental British Values to build children's resilience to radicalisation.
- **Other Factors**
  - Children and young people affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour-based violence, or child trafficking.
- **Escalation**
  - All staff understand how to escalate their concerns if they feel either the local authority and/or AC has not acted adequately to safeguard, and know how to follow local safeguarding procedures to resolve professional disputes between staff and organisations.

- **Personal data**
  - All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and will handle personal data in accordance with the AC Privacy Policy.
- **Statutory Guidance**
  - 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' 2015
  - 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'
  - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

Use of Mobile Phones

- Staff are forbidden from using their personal mobile phones, except in emergency. Phones brought into AC are kept locked away during operating hours.
- All telephone communication to or from AC must be performed using the dedicated Nursery Mobile phone. This number is given to staff and parents during induction/introductory visits.
- Visitors are informed that the use of mobile phones is not permitted, and these are also locked away for the duration of visits.

Photographing/Videoing Children

Permission

- AC seek permission from parents to take photographs or video of their children on the Registration Form and respect any parental decision.
- For group photos of children playing together, permission is sought to allow images of their child to appear in other children's learning journeys and to remain in the AC Planning Book or on learning displays.

Scope

- Photographs/videos will normally only be taken for:
  - Learning Journey Gallery on EY Log
  - Display Boards
  - Participation in events

Security

- All staff ensure all photographs/videos of children are kept safe and secure.
- Use any photographic image of a child or their family which were taken whilst the child was in AC's setting. (All images uploaded are distorted to ensure faces cannot be identified
- Children will only be photographed by staff and on designated AC tablets and cameras.
- Any watch device capable of taking a photograph cannot be worn by staff or visitors. For mobile phones, see above.
- Using EY Log, photographs are taken on password protected devices
- All photos are deleted from the cameras/tablets on a regular basis.

- Displays, name boards and books containing photographs of the children are taken down at the end of every session and stored away out of view.
- Prior to a child leaving AC, all photographs/videos (including the original electronic file), except those within Planning Books or specific display work (for which permission is asked), will be deleted.

Outsourcing of Printed Photographs

- Where the setting uses external companies or third-party services to print photographs (e.g. learning journeys, displays, or parent keepsakes), the following procedures are followed:
- The setting ensures that any third-party provider complies with **UK GDPR** and **Data Protection Act 2018** requirements.
- A **data processing agreement** is in place where required, ensuring images are handled securely and only for the intended purpose.
- Only **authorised staff** are permitted to upload or transfer images for printing.
- Images are shared using **secure methods** (e.g. encrypted systems, password-protected platforms, or secure portals).
- No unnecessary personal data is shared alongside photographs.
- Photographs will only be printed externally where **parental consent** has been obtained in line with the setting's permissions.
- The provider must not retain, reuse, copy, or distribute images beyond the agreed service.
- Once printing is complete, images are **deleted from third-party systems** in accordance with agreed data handling procedures.
- The setting regularly reviews third-party providers to ensure ongoing compliance with safeguarding and data protection standards.

Social Media

See Privacy Policy, Staffing Policy and Social Media Policy.

Monitoring of Absences

See Non-Attendance Policy.

- All absences are recorded.
- A parent is contacted if AC has not received information about the absence by 10.00hrs.
- If no contact is made with the parents and the Lead Practitioner has reason to believe that the child may be at risk of harm, relevant professionals will be contacted.
- If the child is already known to Social Services, then their social worker will also be notified.
- The reasons for absences are reviewed in the Register Audit, which takes place each term. Any cases raising concerns are discussed and any appropriate action taken.
- All holiday destinations are now recorded for Prevent purposes.

Activities

Supervision

- Whenever children are on AC premises at least two adult staff are present.
- Staff are deployed daily to specific areas within the AC setting.
- Children are always kept within sight and hearing of staff.
- There is control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- No child is left alone with visitors in a one-to-one situation.
- Children leave the group only with the authorised adults.
- Sleeping children are checked at least every ten minutes.

Learning

- Key elements of keeping children safe are introduced into learning experiences to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children. That way they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- This is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

PART B - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ABUSE IS SUSPECTED

Key Guidance

AC reacts to suspicions of abuse following the guidance contained in the following:

- 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (Department for Education 2015).
- 'Child Protection Record for use in Early Years Settings' (Early Years Alliance).

Copies of these document are held by AC.

Recognising Abuse

AC acknowledges that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. Staff are trained to recognise the factors that may influence this:

- **Direct symptoms** incl. the things they say, changes in appearance, unexplained bruising or marks etc.
- **Parental Capacity** incl. social exclusion, drug or alcohol abuse, learning disability etc.
- **External threats** incl. organised crime, child trafficking, online grooming etc.
- **Other factors** incl. abuse of disabled children, Female Genital Mutilation.

Recording

AC has a procedure for recording concerns if factors, such as those listed above, are suspected. Its purpose is to ensure that all details are correctly recorded without bias, incl:

- writing down exactly what is suspected or said, including repeating back what the child has told the staff member
- date, time, names of other persons present.
- a body map drawn, if required - No photographs
- A Concern Form started and submitted to one of the LPSs within one working day.
- These records are signed and dated and kept in the Child Protection Record file
- The LPS will then report to the relevant bodies.

Reporting & Informing

AC has a statutory duty to report any suspicions of abuse following the guidance contained in the documents above and the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners. Contact details are kept for all main agencies.

- **Parents** - normally the first point of contact to establish their view of events. However, sometimes this may be inappropriate, especially where it is suspected that the parent is the likely abuser. Advice is sought from the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners, local Safeguarding Children and Child Protection, and Hampshire Childrens Social Services
- **Local Authority** - Concerns are reported to the Local Authority Children's Social Care department.
- **Police** – where the child may be in immediate danger, it may be appropriate to call in the Police, but this would be the decision of the Local Authority Children's Social Care dept.

- **Human Trafficking - National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** – If it is suspected that a child may be a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, it will be referred to the NRM as soon as possible, and refer and/or seek advice from the Local Authority Children's Social Care and/or police.
- **The Channel Programme (Prevent Duty**) – This is a process for safeguarding that assesses the vulnerability of people being drawn into extremism. *See Prevent Duty and Promoting British Values Policies.*
- **Ofsted** (within 14 days) of any incident or accident and any changes in arrangements which may affect the wellbeing of children or where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff - see below.

AC co-operates fully in the reporting process and any subsequent investigation(s).

Confidentiality

See Privacy Policy.
All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Information is only shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board/Local Safeguarding Partners and in line the AC Privacy Policy.

Support to Families

- AC believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, and staff.
- Its Child Protection role and responsibilities are made clear to parents including the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising with the Children's Services Department.
- AC will continue to welcome the child and family whilst any investigations are being made.
- AC will fulfil its role in any Plans implanted to support the child and family, after any investigation e.g. Child Protection Plan from Social Care Worker
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the AC Privacy Policy and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Whistleblowing

See Whistleblowing Policy.

Allegations of abuse against a member of staff, volunteer or student

Note: *AC differentiates clearly between allegations of abuse, and complaints about the quality of care or practice. There is a separate process for complaints.*

Staff, volunteers and students must not put themselves in a situation that may lead to allegations being made against them.

Awareness

- All staff or volunteers know how to raise concerns that they may have about the conduct or behaviour of other people, including colleagues.
- All parents are informed about how to raise concerns about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- AC will respond to allegations that a person who works with children has:
  - behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
  - possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
  - behaved inappropriately towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm

Response

If an allegation is made:

- A Lead Practitioner for Safeguarding must be informed on the same day as the allegation is made.
- The details of any such alleged incident must be recorded.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be informed, and guidance sought before any action against the staff member is taken, unless there is an immediate danger.
- AC co-operates with any investigations carried out by the LADO, Children's Social Care and/or the police.
- Where the LADO, Manager and Children's Services Department agree it is appropriate, the Manager will suspend the member of staff (on full pay) or the volunteer during the investigation. This is not an indication of admission, but to protect the staff member as well as children and families throughout the process. Where it is appropriate, practical and agreed with LADO, AC will seek to offer an alternative to suspension during the investigation, if an alternative is available that will safeguard children and not place the affected staff or volunteer at risk.
- By law, the allegation and response measures must be reported to Ofsted within 14 days.
- Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed because of misconduct relating to a child, the Independent Barring Board administrators are notified for inclusion on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Barred List.

Information Sharing – Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

Effective from 30 September 2026

- Autumn Cottage Childcare recognises that effective and timely information sharing is essential to safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Information held by one practitioner or organisation may appear insignificant in isolation but, when combined with information held by others, may provide a fuller picture of a child's circumstances, needs or potential risk of harm.
- From 30 September 2026, Autumn Cottage Childcare will have regard to the statutory Information Sharing Duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 and the Department for Education statutory guidance, *Information sharing to safeguard children and young people*.

Our responsibility to share information

- Where we hold information about a child, or information about another individual which relates to a child, and consider that information relevant to safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare, we will consider whether sharing that information with another relevant organisation or practitioner may assist them to:
- safeguard or promote the welfare of the child;
- identify or assess a child's needs;
- identify emerging concerns or risks;
- make informed safeguarding or welfare decisions;
- provide appropriate help, support or services; or
- take action to prevent concerns or harm from escalating.
- Where the statutory Information Sharing Duty applies and these conditions are met, relevant information must be shared unless we consider that sharing the information would be more detrimental to the child than not sharing it.
- Information sharing is therefore not limited to situations where a child is already considered to be at risk of significant harm. Appropriate information may be shared at an earlier stage where this could help another professional identify need, provide support or safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Consent, confidentiality and data protection

- Autumn Cottage Childcare respects children's and families' privacy and will handle personal information carefully and securely.
- However, **data protection legislation and confidentiality must not be treated as barriers to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.**
- Parental or carer consent is not always required before information can be shared for safeguarding and welfare purposes. Where appropriate and safe to do so, we will be open and transparent with parents and carers about information sharing and the reasons for it.
- There may be circumstances where informing or seeking the agreement of a parent or carer would place a child or another person at increased risk, prejudice a safeguarding investigation, cause an unnecessary delay in protecting a child, or otherwise not be appropriate. In these circumstances, information may be shared without first informing or seeking consent from the parent or carer where there is a lawful basis to do so.
- Staff must never promise a child or family complete confidentiality where information relates to safeguarding or the welfare of a child.

Relevant and proportionate information

- Information shared by Autumn Cottage Childcare will be relevant, necessary and proportionate to the purpose for which it is being shared.
- We will consider:
- what information is relevant;
- why it needs to be shared;
- who needs to receive it;
- whether the information is accurate and up to date;
- how much information is necessary to achieve the safeguarding or welfare purpose; and

- how the information can be shared securely.
- We will not routinely share an entire child's record where only specific information is relevant.
- Information may include information about another person, such as a parent, carer, sibling or other individual connected with the child, where that information is relevant to safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare.

Recording decisions

- A clear record will be maintained of significant information-sharing decisions.
- Where appropriate, records should include:
- the information shared;
- the reason for sharing it;
- who the information was shared with;
- when and how it was shared;
- whether the child and/or parent or carer was informed;
- any action or outcome resulting from the information sharing; and
- the rationale for a decision not to share information where this has been considered.
- Records must be factual, accurate, appropriately detailed and stored securely in accordance with Autumn Cottage Childcare's safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Staff responsibilities

- All staff have a responsibility to act upon information that may indicate that a child requires help, support or protection.
- Staff must:
- record concerns clearly, accurately and factually;
- report safeguarding and welfare concerns promptly to a member of the DSL team;
- never delay raising a concern because they are uncertain about confidentiality, GDPR or whether information can be shared;
- never promise confidentiality when safeguarding information is disclosed;
- only share confidential information with appropriate people and through appropriate channels; and
- seek advice from a DSL where they are unsure about an information-sharing decision.
- Staff should remember that they may hold only one piece of a much wider safeguarding picture. Information that appears minor in isolation may be important when combined with information held by other professionals or agencies.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Team

- The Autumn Cottage Childcare DSL team is:
- **Lead DSL:** Kelly Smith
- **Deputy DSLs:**
  Ali Bedford
  Laurna Chambers
  Michelle
  Emily
  Georgia

- The DSL team will support staff in making appropriate information-sharing decisions and will ensure that decisions are child-centred, lawful, proportionate and appropriately recorded.
- The DSL team will keep up to date with statutory safeguarding and information-sharing requirements and ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding information, training and updates.

Working with other organisations

- Where appropriate, Autumn Cottage Childcare will work collaboratively and share relevant information with organisations and professionals involved in safeguarding and promoting children's welfare, including children's social care, health professionals, the police, schools and other education or childcare providers and other relevant safeguarding services.
- Information will be shared securely and in accordance with applicable legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements.
- Where another relevant organisation or practitioner requests safeguarding information, the DSL will consider the request promptly and determine what relevant information should be provided in accordance with the Information Sharing Duty and applicable data protection legislation.

Professional judgement and the child's best interests

- The child's safety and welfare will remain central to all information-sharing decisions.
- Where the Information Sharing Duty applies, information should not be withheld simply because staff are uncertain about confidentiality or data protection requirements.
- If there is uncertainty, staff must seek advice from a DSL promptly rather than allowing uncertainty to delay appropriate safeguarding action.
- Where there is an immediate risk of harm to a child, safeguarding action and appropriate information sharing must not be delayed.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS *(correct at the time of writing)*

LADOs (Barbara Piddington/Mark Blackwell)	01962 876364
Local Early Years Team	0300 555 1384
Hampshire Children's Services	0300 555 1384
Hampshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership	01962 876355. hscp@hants.gov.uk
Urgent Child protection enquiries for professionals:	0300 300 0901
NSPCC whistleblowing advice line	0800 028 0285 help@nspcc.org.uk
Ofsted	0300 123 3155 whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
Police Station	0845 045 4545