



Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy

September 2026- September 2027

1. Our commitment

1.1 Acorn Childcare Centre is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child in our care.

1.2 We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, students, volunteers and visitors have a responsibility to protect children from harm and to act promptly when concerns arise.

1.3 We will provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where children are respected, listened to and supported to develop confidence and positive relationships.

1.4 We will work in partnership with parents and carers wherever appropriate and with children's social care, health services, the police, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and other agencies when necessary.

1.5 This policy applies to all children attending Acorn Childcare Centre, including children with additional needs and children who may be particularly vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

2. What safeguarding means

2.1 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children includes:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best possible outcomes.

2.2 We recognise that abuse and neglect can take many forms, including:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- neglect;

- domestic abuse;
- child-on-child abuse;
- online abuse;
- exploitation, including criminal and sexual exploitation;
- grooming;
- radicalisation and extremism;
- female genital mutilation (FGM);
- forced marriage;
- fabricated or induced illness;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- bullying and discriminatory behaviour; and
- other forms of abuse or exploitation.

2.3 Staff must remain alert to concerns about a child's welfare even where there is no obvious physical sign of abuse.

3. Recognising concerns

3.1 Staff should be alert to changes in a child's behaviour, appearance, presentation, relationships or circumstances.

3.2 Concerns may include:

- unexplained injuries or repeated accidents;
- changes in behaviour or emotional wellbeing;
- unusual fearfulness, withdrawal or aggression;
- poor hygiene, hunger or inadequate clothing;
- sexualised behaviour or knowledge that is inappropriate for the child's age;
- concerning changes in family circumstances;
- signs of domestic abuse or coercive control;
- concerning online activity or exposure to harmful material;
- concerns about exploitation, grooming or radicalisation; or
- anything else that causes a member of staff to be concerned about a child's safety or welfare.

3.3 A single sign does not necessarily mean that abuse is taking place. Staff should use professional curiosity and consider the child's individual circumstances.

4. Reporting a concern

4.1 Staff must report safeguarding concerns without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

4.2 The DSL will consider the concern, record the information and decide what action is required.

4.3 Staff must not investigate concerns themselves or promise a child that information will be kept secret.

4.4 If a child makes a disclosure, staff should:

- listen calmly;
- allow the child to speak;
- avoid leading questions;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking;
- explain that the information must be shared with people who can help;
- record the child's words as accurately as possible; and
- report the concern immediately to the DSL.

4.5 If the DSL is unavailable, staff must take appropriate action to ensure that the concern is reported and the child is protected.

4.6 Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the police or emergency services should be contacted without delay.

5. Designated Safeguarding Lead

5.1 Acorn will appoint a DSL and Deputy DSL who are responsible for safeguarding and child protection.

5.2 The DSL will:

- provide advice and support to staff;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded appropriately;
- make referrals to children's social care, the police or other agencies where required;
- work with parents and carers where appropriate;
- liaise with safeguarding partners and other professionals;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training;
- maintain secure safeguarding records;
- monitor safeguarding practice within the setting; and
- ensure this policy reflects current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures.

6. Information sharing and confidentiality

6.1 Acorn recognises that appropriate information sharing is essential to safeguarding children.

6.2 Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and without unnecessary delay where this is necessary to protect a child or promote their welfare.

6.3 Staff must not assume that information cannot be shared simply because it is confidential or because consent has not been obtained. Where safeguarding concerns exist, information should be shared in accordance with the law and current statutory guidance.

6.4 Acorn will follow the Information Sharing Duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004, which comes into force on 30 September 2026, together with the current statutory information-sharing guidance.

6.5 Safeguarding information will be stored securely and only shared with those who have a legitimate reason to receive it.

7. Prevent, extremism and radicalisation

7.1 The **Counter**-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

7.2 Acorn will follow the Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales (2023). This guidance came into force on 31 December 2023 and replaced the previous 2015 guidance.

7.3 Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support terrorism or forms of extremism that can lead to terrorism.

7.4 Children may be vulnerable to grooming, manipulation, exploitation or exposure to extremist material, including online.

7.5 Possible indicators may include:

- increasing isolation;
- increased anger or hostility towards others;
- hateful or discriminatory views;
- unusual secrecy about online activity; or
- exposure to extremist or terrorist material.

7.6 These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being radicalised.

7.7 Staff should follow the Notice, Check, Share approach:

Notice – recognise and record concerns.

Check – discuss concerns promptly with the DSL.

Share – share information with the appropriate safeguarding or Prevent service where necessary.

7.8 The DSL will decide what further action is appropriate, including whether a Prevent referral is required.

8. Promoting equality, inclusion and positive relationships

8.1 Acorn is committed to providing an inclusive environment where discrimination, racism, bullying and hateful behaviour are not tolerated.

8.2 Children will be supported, in an age-appropriate way, to:

- respect others;
- understand fairness;
- develop positive relationships;
- recognise and respect differences;
- listen to different views;
- understand right and wrong; and
- develop empathy and kindness.

8.3 We recognise the importance of challenging discrimination and promoting an inclusive culture, in line with the expectations in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

9. Safer recruitment and suitability

9.1 Acorn will follow safer recruitment procedures to ensure that adults working with children are suitable to do so.

9.2 This includes appropriate:

- application and recruitment checks;
- identity checks;
- references;
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks;
- right-to-work checks;
- qualification checks where required;
- safeguarding and suitability checks; and
- ongoing monitoring of staff suitability.

9.3 All staff must understand their safeguarding responsibilities before working unsupervised with children.

10. Allegations against adults

10.1 Any concern or allegation that an adult working with or caring for children may have:

- harmed a child;
- committed an offence against or relating to a child;
- behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm; or
- otherwise breached professional safeguarding expectations

must be reported immediately to the DSL or manager.

10.2 Acorn will follow the Managing Allegations Against Adults procedures and seek advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where required.

10.3 The September 2026 EYFS framework requires providers to notify Ofsted of allegations of harm, rather than only allegations of “serious harm”, involving anyone living, working or looking after children on the premises.

11. Safer sleep

11.1 Acorn will follow the current EYFS safer-sleep requirements.

11.2 Staff will ensure that babies and young children are cared for in accordance with the setting's safer-sleep procedures, taking account of individual needs and circumstances.

11.3 The September 2026 EYFS framework now includes explicit safer-sleep requirements within the statutory framework.

12. Online safety

12.1 Acorn recognises that children may be exposed to risks through digital technology and online content.

12.2 We will:

- supervise children's use of digital devices;
- use appropriate filtering and safety measures;
- teach age-appropriate online safety;
- respond to concerns about harmful or inappropriate content;
- consider online grooming, exploitation and radicalisation as safeguarding concerns; and
- support parents and carers to understand online risks.

13. Children with additional vulnerabilities

13.1 We recognise that some children may face increased safeguarding risks because of their circumstances or additional needs.

13.2 Staff will consider individual vulnerabilities and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and inclusive.

13.3 Children with additional needs will not be treated differently when concerns are raised about their safety.

14. Recording and reviewing concerns

14.1 All safeguarding concerns must be recorded accurately, objectively and as soon as possible.

14.2 Records should include:

- the date and time;
- what was observed or disclosed;
- the child's own words where relevant;
- who was informed;
- actions taken;
- referrals made;
- decisions and the reasons for those decisions; and
- any further action required.

14.3 Safeguarding records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with data protection legislation and information-sharing requirements.

15. Training

15.1 All staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training.

15.2 Staff will understand:

- their safeguarding responsibilities;
- the signs and indicators of abuse and neglect;
- how to respond to disclosures;
- how to report concerns;
- online safety;
- Prevent and radicalisation;
- safer recruitment and professional boundaries; and
- the importance of information sharing.

15.3 Training will be refreshed in accordance with statutory requirements and the needs of the setting.

16. Local safeguarding arrangements

16.1 Acorn will follow the safeguarding procedures of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and work with local safeguarding partners.

16.2 Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Donna Downs donna.downs@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

Lorna Hodgett lorna.hodgett@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

16.3 Deputy DSL:

Sarah Blades sarah.blades@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

Sarah Kennedy sarah.kennedy@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

Sally Woods sally.woods@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

Martha Bomken martha.bomken@acornchildcarecentre.co.uk

Lincolnshire Children's Services:

01522 782111 – Monday to Friday, 8am–6pm

Out of hours Children's Services:

01522 782333

Lincolnshire Police:

101 – non-emergency

999 – emergency or immediate danger

17. Legal and statutory framework

17.1 This policy should be read alongside the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Childcare Act 2006
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Information Sharing Duty under section 16LA of the Children Act 2004

17.2 The policy also follows:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- EYFS Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers – September 2026;
- Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales (2023);
- Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People – September 2026; and
- relevant Lincolnshire safeguarding procedures and Ofsted requirements.

18. Review

18.1 This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or the needs of the children attending Acorn Childcare Centre.

Policy owner: Lorna Hodgett

Date of policy: September 2026

Review date: September 2027

Reviewed by: Donna Downs