



APPLE TREE FARM SERVICES CIC



SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Status

Approved

Responsible Lead

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Approved By

Board of Directors

Date Approved

2nd July 2026

Review Date

1st July 2027

Our Commitment

"Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person. We believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that every child has the right to feel safe, respected, listened to and supported to thrive."

This policy applies to all employees, directors, volunteers, students, therapists, contractors, visitors and anyone working on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.



Equality Statement

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. This policy will be implemented fairly and consistently, ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are accessible and responsive to the individual needs of every child, young person, family and member of staff.

1. Statement of Commitment

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child and young person who accesses our services. We believe that every child has the right to grow up safe, respected, listened to and supported to reach their full potential, regardless of their age, disability, neurodivergence, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation or family circumstances.

Safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. It underpins every aspect of our provision, from our therapeutic practice and educational programmes to our interactions with families, partner agencies and the wider community. We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that creating a safe, nurturing environment requires the commitment, vigilance and professionalism of every person working with or on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

As a specialist therapeutic farm-based provider, we understand that many of the children and young people we support have experienced adversity, trauma, disrupted education, anxiety, emotional distress or unmet additional needs. Our approach is therefore rooted in trauma-informed, attachment-aware and neuro-affirming practice, recognising that behaviour is a form of communication and that trusting relationships are fundamental to safety, recovery and learning.

Our practice is informed by the principles of **PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)** and aims to create an emotionally and physically safe environment where children feel valued, empowered and able to develop resilience, confidence and independence.

We are committed to:

- placing the welfare, wishes and best interests of children and young people at the centre of all decision-making;
- providing a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where children feel listened to and protected;
- maintaining a strong safeguarding culture in which concerns are identified early, taken seriously and responded to promptly;
- working collaboratively with parents, carers, schools, local authorities, health professionals and safeguarding partners to achieve the best possible outcomes for children;
- ensuring all staff, volunteers and directors understand their safeguarding responsibilities and receive appropriate training and supervision;
- promoting children's physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing through therapeutic, strengths-based and relationship-centred practice;
- maintaining robust safeguarding procedures that reflect current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding partnership arrangements;
- fostering a culture of openness, accountability and continuous learning where professional curiosity, respectful challenge and reflective practice are encouraged.



The Board of Directors accepts overall responsibility for ensuring effective safeguarding governance across the organisation. Day-to-day operational responsibility rests with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. Every adult working within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC has an individual responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to act immediately if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

Safeguarding is not viewed as a standalone responsibility but as an integral part of delivering high-quality therapeutic support, education and care. Through our work with children, families and partner agencies, we strive to ensure that every child feels safe, experiences positive relationships and can thrive.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is to establish a clear framework for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people who access services provided by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

This policy demonstrates the organisation's commitment to meeting its statutory safeguarding responsibilities and provides clear guidance to all adults working within or on behalf of the organisation on recognising, responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns.

The policy aims to ensure that:

- the welfare of children and young people is always the paramount consideration;
- safeguarding responsibilities are clearly understood by all staff, volunteers, directors and other adults working on behalf of the organisation;
- children and young people are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and avoidable harm;
- concerns about a child's welfare are identified early, recorded accurately and responded to promptly and appropriately;
- safeguarding arrangements comply with current legislation, statutory guidance and local safeguarding partnership procedures;
- children and young people are supported within an environment that promotes emotional wellbeing, inclusion, dignity and respect;
- robust governance arrangements ensure safeguarding remains a strategic priority across the organisation;
- staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, supervision and ongoing professional development;
- effective partnership working is maintained with parents, carers, schools, local authorities, health professionals and other safeguarding agencies;
- safeguarding practice is regularly monitored, reviewed and continuously improved.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding extends beyond child protection and includes creating an environment where children feel physically and emotionally safe, develop healthy relationships, build resilience and are protected from all forms of harm both offline and online.

We recognise that many of the children and young people accessing our services have experienced trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), neurodevelopmental differences, social, emotional or mental health needs, disrupted education or complex family circumstances.



Our safeguarding arrangements are therefore underpinned by therapeutic, relationship-based practice that seeks to reduce risk, promote resilience and enable children to flourish.

3. Scope

This policy applies to every person working for or on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, regardless of their role, employment status or length of involvement with the organisation. It applies across all services delivered by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, including but not limited to:

- Alternative Education Provision
- Therapeutic Farm Provision
- One-to-one therapeutic support
- School group visits
- Holiday activities and programmes
- Counselling services
- Play Therapy
- Drawing and Talking Therapy
- Family support services
- Outreach and community-based activities
- Off-site educational visits and activities

This policy applies to:

- members of the Board of Directors;
- all employees, whether permanent, temporary, fixed-term or casual;
- sessional workers;
- volunteers;
- students on placement;
- apprentices;
- work experience students;
- self-employed practitioners and therapists;
- counsellors and clinical professionals;
- Play Therapists;
- Drawing and Talking Practitioners;
- contractors working on behalf of the organisation;
- agency workers;
- visiting professionals;
- external activity providers;
- consultants;
- visitors attending the farm or any organisation-led activity.

All individuals covered by this policy are expected to:

- read and understand this policy;
- complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role;
- act in accordance with safeguarding procedures at all times;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- report concerns immediately;



- contribute to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for children and young people.

This policy applies whenever activities are undertaken under the responsibility of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, including:

- on the farm site;
- during off-site visits;
- whilst transporting children where authorised;
- during community activities;
- whilst delivering online or virtual services;
- during home visits where these form part of agreed service delivery.

Safeguarding responsibilities extend beyond direct contact with children. Individuals covered by this policy are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct, recognising that behaviour outside the workplace may also affect their suitability to work with children and young people.

4. Governance and Accountability

Effective safeguarding requires strong leadership, clear accountability and a culture in which the welfare of children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to maintaining robust safeguarding governance through clearly defined roles, effective oversight and continuous review of safeguarding practice.

The organisation recognises that safeguarding is a strategic priority and is embedded throughout all aspects of governance, operational management and service delivery.

The Board of Directors holds ultimate accountability for safeguarding across Apple Tree Farm Services CIC. Day-to-day operational responsibility is delegated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who is supported by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). Every individual working for or on behalf of the organisation has a personal responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to act immediately when concerns arise.

Safeguarding governance includes:

- ensuring safeguarding remains a standing organisational priority;
 - promoting a positive safeguarding culture throughout the organisation;
 - providing sufficient resources to implement effective safeguarding arrangements;
 - ensuring policies remain compliant with current legislation and statutory guidance;
 - maintaining effective quality assurance and oversight of safeguarding practice;
 - promoting partnership working with statutory agencies and safeguarding partners;
 - ensuring continuous learning following incidents, reviews and changes to national guidance.
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Responsibilities of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has overall accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

The Board will:

- ensure the organisation meets all statutory safeguarding responsibilities;
- approve and annually review the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and associated safeguarding procedures;
- ensure safeguarding remains a strategic priority within organisational planning and decision-making;
- appoint a suitably trained Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead with sufficient authority, time and resources to fulfil their responsibilities;
- receive regular safeguarding reports to provide assurance that safeguarding arrangements remain effective;
- monitor safeguarding risks as part of the organisation's overall governance and risk management framework;
- ensure appropriate safer recruitment procedures are implemented;
- ensure safeguarding training is provided to all staff, volunteers and directors appropriate to their role;
- ensure appropriate arrangements exist for managing allegations and low-level concerns about adults working with children;
- ensure effective whistleblowing arrangements are in place;
- ensure sufficient financial and staffing resources are available to maintain safe practice;
- promote a culture of openness, accountability, reflective practice and continuous improvement.

The Board recognises that safeguarding governance extends beyond policy compliance and includes monitoring organisational culture, learning from incidents, responding to safeguarding audits and ensuring children remain at the centre of all organisational decision-making.

Responsibilities of the Director

The Director has overall operational responsibility for implementing the safeguarding arrangements approved by the Board of Directors.

The Director will:

- promote a strong safeguarding culture across all services;
- ensure safeguarding procedures are consistently implemented throughout the organisation;
- support the Designated Safeguarding Lead in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- ensure sufficient staffing levels and supervision arrangements are maintained to safeguard children effectively;
- ensure all staff receive appropriate induction, safeguarding training and ongoing supervision;



- ensure safeguarding considerations inform operational planning, staffing, recruitment and service delivery;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately;
- maintain effective relationships with commissioners, schools, safeguarding partners and regulatory bodies;
- ensure safeguarding learning is shared across the organisation and embedded into practice;
- support staff wellbeing, recognising that safeguarding work can be emotionally demanding.

The Director will work closely with the Board of Directors and the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure safeguarding remains central to organisational leadership.

Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection across Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

The DSL will:

- provide professional leadership for safeguarding practice across the organisation;
- act as the principal point of contact for safeguarding concerns;
- ensure concerns are responded to promptly, proportionately and in accordance with local safeguarding procedures;
- make referrals to Children's Social Care, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Police, Early Help and other agencies where appropriate;
- maintain accurate, confidential and secure safeguarding records;
- monitor safeguarding concerns and identify emerging patterns or risks;
- attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings, Child Protection Conferences, Child in Need meetings, Early Help meetings and strategy discussions where appropriate;
- provide safeguarding advice and guidance to staff and volunteers;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are appropriately escalated where necessary;
- oversee safeguarding training and induction;
- ensure safeguarding policies remain current and reflect statutory guidance;
- work with the Board of Directors to provide safeguarding assurance and annual safeguarding reports;
- maintain effective professional relationships with partner agencies;
- promote safeguarding awareness across the organisation;
- ensure children receive appropriate support following safeguarding concerns;
- oversee the management of allegations and low-level concerns in accordance with statutory guidance and local procedures.

The DSL will undertake role-specific safeguarding training and ensure their knowledge remains current through regular professional development and updates.



Responsibilities of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead supports the DSL and acts with the same authority whenever the DSL is unavailable.

The Deputy DSL will:

- provide safeguarding advice and support to staff;
- respond to safeguarding concerns in the absence of the DSL;
- maintain safeguarding records where delegated;
- contribute to multi-agency meetings;
- support safeguarding training and awareness;
- assist with safeguarding audits and quality assurance;
- contribute to safeguarding policy review;
- work collaboratively with the DSL to ensure continuity of safeguarding leadership.

The Deputy DSL will receive safeguarding training equivalent to that undertaken by the DSL.

Responsibilities of Staff

Every employee has an individual responsibility to safeguard children and young people.

All staff must:

- place the welfare of children above all other considerations;
- read and understand this policy and associated safeguarding procedures;
- complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role;
- maintain professional curiosity and remain alert to indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL or Deputy DSL;
- accurately record safeguarding concerns in accordance with organisational procedures;
- never assume another person has reported a concern;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries at all times;
- contribute to creating a safe, respectful, inclusive and nurturing environment;
- work collaboratively with colleagues and partner agencies to safeguard children;
- maintain confidentiality whilst recognising that safeguarding information must be shared where necessary to protect children;
- report concerns regarding the behaviour of adults working with children, including low-level concerns;
- comply with the Staff Code of Conduct and all safeguarding-related policies.

Safeguarding is not the responsibility of one individual or team. Every member of staff has both a professional and moral duty to act immediately where concerns arise.

Responsibilities of Volunteers

Volunteers play an important role within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC and are expected to uphold the same safeguarding standards as employees.

All volunteers will:



- receive safeguarding induction appropriate to their role;
- understand how to recognise and report safeguarding concerns;
- work within the limits of their role and competence;
- remain under appropriate supervision;
- maintain professional boundaries at all times;
- comply with all safeguarding policies and procedures;
- immediately report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL or Deputy DSL.

Volunteers must never assume responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns independently. Their responsibility is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately and report them immediately.

Accountability Framework

Safeguarding accountability within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is summarised below:

<u>Role</u>	<u>Primary Accountability</u>
Board of Directors	Strategic oversight, governance, safeguarding assurance and policy approval
Director	Operational leadership and implementation of safeguarding arrangements
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Strategic and operational leadership of safeguarding and child protection
Deputy DSL	Supports and deputises for the DSL
Managers	Day-to-day implementation of safeguarding procedures and supervision
Staff	Recognise, respond, record and report concerns immediately
Volunteers	Recognise concerns, maintain professional conduct and report immediately

Safeguarding responsibilities cannot be delegated away. While specific safeguarding functions are assigned to designated roles, every adult working for or on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC shares responsibility for protecting children and promoting their welfare.

5. Key Safeguarding Contacts

The following safeguarding contacts should be displayed prominently within the organisation and reviewed at least annually or whenever personnel or contact details change.

Role	Name	Telephone	Email
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Brenda Pedroni	07908 783759	brenda@appletriefarmservices.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Phil Leonard	07554817553	phil@appletriefarmservices.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Shelly Buswell	07423191935	shelly@appletriefarmservices.co.uk



External Safeguarding Contacts

Agency	Contact Details
Devon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Tel: 0345 155 1071
MASH Secure Email	mashsecure@devon.gov.uk
Early Help	Via MASH – 0345 155 1071
Emergency Duty Service (Out of Hours)	0345 600 0388 (<i>confirm current number annually</i>)
Devon Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	01392 384964 (<i>confirm annually</i>)
Devon & Cornwall Police (Emergency)	999
Devon & Cornwall Police (Non-Emergency)	101
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111

Emergency Response

If a child or young person is believed to be at immediate risk of significant harm, staff must:

1. Contact the emergency services by dialling 999 if an immediate emergency exists.
2. Take any reasonable action necessary to protect the child from immediate harm without placing themselves or others at risk.
3. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL as soon as it is safe to do so.
4. Record the incident accurately and contemporaneously in accordance with organisational procedures.

Staff should never delay contacting emergency services while attempting to seek internal approval where immediate protection is required.

Availability of the DSL

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL will normally be available whenever children are accessing services provided by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

Where neither is immediately available, staff must not delay taking action to safeguard a child. Immediate concerns should be referred directly to Children's Social Care, the Police or emergency services as appropriate, with the DSL informed at the earliest opportunity.

6. Safeguarding Principles

At Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, safeguarding is not viewed solely as responding to concerns of abuse or neglect. It is a proactive, relationship-based approach that seeks to create an environment in which children and young people feel physically safe, emotionally secure, valued, respected and able to thrive.

Many of the children and young people accessing our services have experienced adversity, trauma, disrupted education, unmet additional needs, anxiety, social isolation or significant life



challenges. Our safeguarding practice recognises the impact these experiences can have on behaviour, emotional regulation, relationships and engagement with learning. We are committed to providing a therapeutic environment where every interaction contributes to a child's sense of safety, belonging and wellbeing. Our safeguarding practice is underpinned by the following principles.

Child-Centred Practice

The welfare of the child is paramount.

All safeguarding decisions will be made with the child's best interests at the centre of planning and decision-making. We recognise that every child has the right to be heard, listened to and treated with dignity and respect.

We will:

- listen carefully to children's views, wishes and feelings;
- take all concerns seriously;
- involve children in decisions wherever appropriate and safe to do so;
- recognise that every child has unique strengths, experiences and needs;
- ensure children's voices influence the planning and delivery of support.

We understand that some children may communicate their experiences through behaviour, play, body language, relationships or emotional responses rather than through spoken language. Staff are expected to remain professionally curious and seek to understand the meaning behind behaviour.

Trauma-Informed Practice

We recognise that trauma can significantly affect a child's development, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, relationships and ability to learn.

Many children accessing Apple Tree Farm Services CIC have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), disrupted attachments, loss, abuse, neglect, anxiety or educational trauma. Rather than asking:

"What is wrong with this child?"

our practice encourages staff to consider:

"What may have happened to this child?"

A trauma-informed approach means we:

- prioritise emotional and physical safety;
 - recognise the impact of trauma on behaviour;
 - minimise unnecessary stressors and potential triggers;
 - avoid punitive responses wherever possible;
 - provide consistency, predictability and emotional containment;
 - build trusting relationships over time;
 - recognise behaviour as communication;
 - support emotional regulation before expecting engagement or learning;
 - encourage recovery through positive relationships, choice and empowerment.
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Attachment-Aware Practice

Positive relationships are central to children's emotional development and wellbeing. Many children accessing our services have experienced disrupted attachments or inconsistent relationships with adults. We therefore seek to provide safe, reliable and emotionally available adults who model healthy relationships and promote trust.

Our staff aim to:

- develop secure, consistent and reliable relationships;
- respond with empathy and curiosity;
- provide emotional containment during times of distress;
- understand the impact of attachment experiences on behaviour;
- maintain clear professional boundaries whilst building trusting relationships;
- work collaboratively with families and professionals to promote relational safety.

PACE-Informed Practice

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts the principles of PACE (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy), developed by Dr Dan Hughes, as a core therapeutic approach to relationship building and emotional safety.

PACE supports children to feel accepted, understood and emotionally secure while reducing shame, fear and defensive behaviours.

Staff seek to demonstrate:

Playfulness

Using warmth, humour and positive interactions to reduce anxiety, strengthen relationships and create emotionally safe learning experiences.

Acceptance

Accepting children's thoughts, feelings and internal experiences without judgement, while maintaining appropriate behavioural expectations and boundaries.

Curiosity

Seeking to understand the reasons behind behaviour rather than making assumptions or responding punitively.

Staff remain professionally curious, asking themselves:

"What is this child communicating through their behaviour?"

Empathy

Responding with genuine compassion and understanding, acknowledging children's emotions while supporting them to develop emotional regulation and resilience.

PACE principles are embedded throughout our daily interactions, therapeutic practice and safeguarding responses.

Therapeutic Practice

Safeguarding at Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is strengthened through therapeutic practice. Our services are designed to promote emotional wellbeing, resilience, confidence and healthy relationships through carefully planned experiences within a safe farm environment.

Therapeutic practice includes:



- animal-assisted interventions;
- outdoor learning;
- sensory regulation;
- nature-based activities;
- creative and expressive opportunities;
- play;
- counselling;
- Play Therapy;
- Drawing and Talking Therapy;
- co-regulation with trusted adults;
- strengths-based approaches.

These approaches support children to develop emotional regulation, confidence, resilience and positive relationships while reducing the impact of stress and anxiety.

Neuro-affirming Practice

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises neurodiversity as a natural and valuable aspect of human diversity.

Many children accessing our services are autistic, have ADHD or identify as neurodivergent. We are committed to creating environments that recognise and celebrate individual differences rather than seeking to normalise or mask neurodivergent ways of thinking, communicating or interacting with the world.

Our neuro-affirming practice includes:

- respecting different communication styles;
- adapting environments to reduce sensory overwhelm;
- recognising sensory needs and regulation strategies;
- supporting autonomy, choice and self-advocacy;
- avoiding practices that encourage masking or suppression of authentic behaviour;
- recognising that behaviour often reflects unmet needs rather than deliberate non-compliance;
- working collaboratively with children and families to understand individual strengths and preferences.

We believe that children should never be made to feel that who they are is a problem to be fixed.

Working in Partnership

Safeguarding is most effective when organisations work collaboratively.

We recognise the importance of positive partnerships with:

- parents and carers;
- schools and educational settings;
- local authorities;
- health professionals;
- Children's Social Care;
- Early Help services;
- CAMHS;
- Police;
- voluntary sector organisations;



- other professionals involved in a child's life.

We will share information appropriately and lawfully where it is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Equality, Inclusion and Respect

Every child has the right to feel safe, valued and included.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to creating an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice.

Safeguarding arrangements will always take account of children's individual needs, including those relating to disability, neurodivergence, communication, language, culture, ethnicity, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation.

We recognise that some children may face additional barriers to recognising abuse, reporting concerns or accessing support, and we will make reasonable adjustments to ensure safeguarding arrangements remain accessible and effective for every child.

Continuous Learning and Reflective Practice

Safeguarding is an evolving area of practice.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to maintaining a culture of reflective practice, professional curiosity and continuous improvement.

We will:

- learn from safeguarding incidents and near misses;
- participate in safeguarding audits and quality assurance activities;
- review safeguarding practice regularly;
- keep abreast of changes in legislation and statutory guidance;
- encourage open discussion and professional challenge;
- support staff through supervision, reflection and ongoing training.

Safeguarding is embedded within our organisational culture and informs every aspect of our work with children, young people and families.

7. Definitions of Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment that may occur within a family, institutional or community setting, by adults or by other children. Abuse can take place in person, online or through a combination of both.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts the definitions of abuse contained within Working Together to Safeguard Children and recognises that abuse may occur through a single act or omission, or through a series of repeated events over time.

Children may experience more than one type of abuse simultaneously, and indicators of abuse may overlap. Staff should remain professionally curious, consider the child's lived experience and never rely on a single indicator when assessing risk.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate infliction of physical harm upon a child.

It may involve:



- hitting;
- shaking;
- throwing;
- poisoning;
- burning or scalding;
- drowning;
- suffocating;
- fabricating or inducing illness;
- any action that causes physical injury or unnecessary physical suffering.

Physical abuse may also occur where a parent or carer deliberately causes or exaggerates symptoms of illness in a child.

Possible Indicators

Indicators may include, but are not limited to:

- unexplained injuries;
- injuries inconsistent with the explanation provided;
- frequent bruising or burns;
- injuries at different stages of healing;
- reluctance to discuss injuries;
- fear of physical contact;
- flinching when approached;
- inappropriate clothing used to conceal injuries;
- repeated attendance with injuries;
- delayed presentation for medical treatment.

The presence of one or more indicators does not necessarily mean abuse has occurred. Staff should consider the wider context and seek advice from the DSL where concerns arise.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that causes severe or persistent adverse effects on their emotional development.

It may include:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate;
- making a child feel valued only insofar as they meet another person's needs;
- preventing a child from expressing their views;
- silencing or ridiculing a child;
- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations;
- overprotection or excessive limitation of exploration and learning;
- exposing children to domestic abuse;
- serious bullying, including online bullying;
- causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger;
- exploiting or corrupting children.

Some degree of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse, although it may also occur independently.

Possible Indicators

Indicators may include:



- low self-esteem;
- excessive anxiety;
- withdrawn behaviour;
- lack of confidence;
- developmental delay;
- extreme attachment behaviours;
- excessive compliance;
- aggression;
- self-harm;
- eating difficulties;
- emotional dysregulation;
- difficulties forming healthy relationships;
- persistent feelings of worthlessness.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing, coercing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities.

The child may or may not understand what is happening and may not recognise that abuse is taking place.

Sexual abuse may involve:

- physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts;
- kissing or inappropriate touching;
- causing children to engage in sexual activity with others;
- involving children in looking at or producing sexual images;
- encouraging children to watch sexual activity;
- online sexual abuse;
- sexual exploitation;
- grooming;
- abuse facilitated through technology.

Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adults or by other children.

Possible Indicators

Possible indicators include:

- age-inappropriate sexualised behaviour or language;
- sudden changes in behaviour;
- fear of certain individuals or places;
- unexplained gifts, money or possessions;
- sexually transmitted infections;
- pregnancy;
- self-harm;
- anxiety or depression;
- sleep disturbance;
- regression;
- reluctance to change clothing for activities;
- avoidance of physical contact;
- online behaviours indicating exploitation or grooming.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy through maternal substance misuse and, following birth, may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing or shelter;
- protect a child from physical or emotional harm;
- provide appropriate supervision;
- ensure access to medical care or treatment;
- meet emotional needs;
- provide appropriate education;
- respond consistently to a child's developmental needs.

Neglect may be a single serious incident but is more commonly characterised by an ongoing pattern of inadequate care.

Possible Indicators

Indicators may include:

- persistent hunger;
- poor hygiene;
- inappropriate clothing;
- untreated medical conditions;
- repeated absence from education;
- developmental delay;
- poor growth;
- tiredness;
- social withdrawal;
- poor emotional regulation;
- lack of supervision;
- persistent low self-esteem;
- unsafe home conditions.

Professional Curiosity

Recognising abuse requires professional judgement rather than reliance upon checklists.

Staff are expected to remain professionally curious by:

- noticing changes in presentation or behaviour;
- considering the child's lived experience;
- listening carefully to children's voices;
- asking appropriate, open questions where necessary;
- recording factual observations;
- discussing concerns promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

No single indicator should be viewed in isolation. Staff should consider patterns of behaviour, cumulative harm and contextual safeguarding risks when determining whether concerns should be reported.



Where there is any doubt, advice should always be sought from the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The welfare of the child must remain the overriding consideration in all safeguarding decisions.

8. Wider Safeguarding Issues

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding extends far beyond protecting children from physical abuse or neglect. Safeguarding includes protecting children and young people from all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination and harm, whether occurring within families, peer groups, communities or online.

Staff are expected to remain alert to emerging safeguarding risks and understand that many forms of abuse are interconnected. Children may experience multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously, and safeguarding concerns should always be considered within the wider context of a child's lived experiences.

The following safeguarding issues form part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Child-on-Child Abuse

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that children can abuse other children. Such abuse will never be dismissed as "banter", "growing up", "part of childhood" or "just children being children."

Child-on-child abuse may include:

- bullying, including prejudice-based bullying;
- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- sexual violence;
- sexual harassment;
- coercive or controlling behaviour;
- initiation or hazing behaviours;
- sharing of indecent images;
- online abuse;
- harmful sexual behaviour.

All allegations of child-on-child abuse will be taken seriously. Support will be provided for both the child experiencing harm and the child displaying concerning behaviour, recognising that both may require safeguarding intervention.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Sexual violence and harassment may occur between children of any age and gender and may happen both on and offline.

Examples include:

- sexual assault;
- rape;
- unwanted touching;
- sexual comments;



- sexist behaviour;
- sexualised jokes;
- inappropriate online communication;
- coercion into sexual activity;
- image-based abuse.

Children will always be listened to, supported and protected. Reports will never be dismissed because of the age of those involved.

Domestic Abuse

Children who witness domestic abuse are victims in their own right.

Domestic abuse may affect children even when they are not directly involved in abusive incidents.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that domestic abuse may have significant effects upon:

- emotional wellbeing;
- behaviour;
- attendance;
- relationships;
- anxiety;
- confidence;
- educational engagement.

Where domestic abuse is identified, staff will work alongside safeguarding agencies to ensure children receive appropriate support.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where individuals or groups exploit children into criminal activity for the benefit of others.

Examples include:

- transporting drugs or money;
- theft;
- violence;
- intimidation;
- carrying weapons;
- organised criminal activity.

Children involved in criminal exploitation are victims of abuse, regardless of whether criminal offences have occurred.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse where children receive, or believe they will receive, something in exchange for sexual activity.

Children may be groomed through:

- relationships;
- gifts;
- money;
- affection;



- status;
- alcohol or drugs;
- online communication.

Exploitation may occur without the child recognising they are being abused.

Staff remain vigilant to changes in behaviour, unexplained gifts, missing episodes, online activity and emotional changes.

County Lines

County Lines involves organised criminal networks exploiting children to transport or distribute drugs and money across geographical areas.

Children may experience:

- coercion;
- intimidation;
- violence;
- threats;
- debt bondage;
- missing episodes.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that children involved in County Lines activity are victims of exploitation and require safeguarding support.

Online Safety

Technology forms an important part of children's everyday lives.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to promoting safe, responsible and respectful use of technology while recognising both its benefits and potential risks.

Online safeguarding includes:

- cyberbullying;
- online grooming;
- exploitation;
- inappropriate content;
- online radicalisation;
- gaming risks;
- social media;
- image sharing;
- online scams;
- AI-generated abuse.

Children are supported to develop digital resilience alongside practical online safety skills.

Filtering and Monitoring

Where children access organisational technology, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will implement appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements to reduce exposure to harmful or inappropriate online material.

Filtering and monitoring systems will be proportionate to the organisation's activities and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective.



Technology alone cannot keep children safe. Staff supervision, education and professional curiosity remain central to online safeguarding.

Radicalisation and the Prevent Duty

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises its statutory duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Staff will receive Prevent awareness training appropriate to their role and remain alert to indicators that a child may be vulnerable to radicalisation or extremist influence.

Concerns will be discussed with the DSL and referred appropriately in accordance with local safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding children from radicalisation is approached in the same child-centred manner as any other safeguarding concern.

Mental Health

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that mental health concerns may be both an indicator of abuse and a consequence of adverse experiences.

Mental health difficulties do not automatically indicate abuse. However, persistent changes in emotional wellbeing, behaviour or functioning may indicate unmet safeguarding needs.

Our therapeutic model enables staff to:

- identify emerging concerns early;
 - provide emotionally safe environments;
 - support regulation;
 - promote resilience;
 - work alongside mental health professionals where appropriate.
-

Children Missing from Education or Provision

Children who go missing from education, therapeutic provision or home may be at increased risk of:

- abuse;
- neglect;
- exploitation;
- criminal involvement;
- radicalisation;
- forced marriage;
- trafficking.

Attendance patterns are monitored closely and unexplained absences followed up promptly in partnership with families and commissioning organisations.

Serious Violence

Staff remain alert to indicators that children may be vulnerable to serious violence.

Indicators may include:

- increased aggression;



- unexplained injuries;
- possession of weapons;
- association with older peers;
- changes in friendship groups;
- repeated missing episodes;
- involvement with criminal activity.

Concerns will be shared with the DSL without delay.

Honour-Based Abuse

Honour-based abuse includes crimes committed to protect or defend perceived family or community honour.

Examples include:

- coercion;
- threats;
- assault;
- isolation;
- forced marriage;
- female genital mutilation.

Honour-based abuse is a safeguarding matter and will always be treated seriously.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage differs from arranged marriage because one or both individuals have not freely consented.

Children may experience:

- emotional pressure;
- physical threats;
- coercion;
- violence;
- isolation.

Any concerns regarding forced marriage will be referred immediately to the DSL and appropriate safeguarding agencies.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation is illegal in the UK and is recognised as a serious form of child abuse. Staff should remain alert to indicators that a child may be at risk of FGM or may already have undergone the procedure.

Any concerns will be managed in accordance with statutory guidance and safeguarding procedures.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Children may be exploited through modern slavery or trafficking for criminal, sexual, domestic or labour exploitation.

Staff will remain alert to indicators including:



- unexplained travel;
- fearfulness;
- control by others;
- poor living conditions;
- exploitation through work or criminality.

All concerns will be reported immediately.

Upskirting

Upskirting is a criminal offence involving the taking or sharing of images beneath a person's clothing without consent.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will treat incidents of upskirting as safeguarding concerns and respond in accordance with child protection procedures.

Nude Image Sharing

Children may create or share nude or semi-nude images voluntarily or as a result of coercion, grooming or exploitation.

Staff must never:

- view images unnecessarily;
- forward images;
- save images on personal devices.

Any incident will be managed in accordance with national guidance and referred to the DSL immediately.

AI-Generated Abuse Images

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises the emerging safeguarding risks presented by artificial intelligence.

AI may be used to:

- generate realistic abuse images;
- create deepfake sexual imagery;
- facilitate grooming;
- manipulate children;
- produce harmful or exploitative content.

Any concerns involving AI-generated abuse or exploitation will be treated as safeguarding concerns and referred appropriately.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Children displaying harmful sexual behaviour require careful safeguarding assessment.

Our response will always balance:

- safeguarding children who may have experienced harm;
- protecting children from further abuse;
- providing appropriate support for children displaying concerning behaviours.



Behaviour will never be viewed in isolation. Consideration will be given to developmental stage, lived experiences, trauma history, neurodevelopmental differences and contextual safeguarding risks.

Professional Curiosity

Many wider safeguarding concerns present gradually rather than through a single incident. Staff are expected to maintain professional curiosity by:

- noticing patterns;
- recording concerns accurately;
- discussing emerging worries promptly;
- seeking advice whenever uncertain;
- recognising cumulative harm.

Where there is doubt, staff should always consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

9. Children with SEND

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is a specialist provider supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including those who are autistic, have ADHD, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory differences, speech, language and communication needs, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, and those experiencing emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), trauma or other complex needs. We recognise that children with SEND are statistically at greater risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation than their peers and may face additional barriers to recognising harm, communicating concerns or accessing support.

Safeguarding arrangements therefore take account of each child's individual strengths, communication preferences, developmental stage and support needs.

Understanding Increased Vulnerability

Children with SEND may be more vulnerable because they:

- may have reduced verbal communication;
- may communicate distress through behaviour rather than language;
- may depend upon adults for intimate or personal care;
- may experience social isolation;
- may have limited awareness of healthy relationships or personal boundaries;
- may be more trusting of adults or peers;
- may be less likely to be believed;
- may have experienced repeated exclusion or discrimination;
- may mask distress in order to meet expectations;
- may find changes in routine particularly challenging.

Staff must never assume that behaviours are solely attributable to a child's diagnosis or disability. Changes in presentation should always be explored with professional curiosity.



Neuro-affirming Safeguarding

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts a neuro-affirming approach to safeguarding.

We recognise neurodiversity as a natural variation in human development and understand that autistic children, children with ADHD and other neurodivergent children may communicate, regulate emotions and experience the world differently.

Our safeguarding practice therefore seeks to:

- understand the child's communication style;
- recognise sensory needs;
- reduce unnecessary environmental stressors;
- provide predictable routines;
- support autonomy and choice;
- avoid compliance-based approaches that increase vulnerability;
- understand that distress behaviours often communicate unmet needs;
- work collaboratively with families to understand each child's profile.

We do not interpret neurodivergent characteristics as behavioural problems requiring correction.

Communication

Many children accessing our services communicate differently.

Staff will:

- adapt communication to meet individual needs;
- use visual supports where appropriate;
- allow additional processing time;
- recognise non-verbal communication;
- avoid leading questions;
- provide emotionally safe opportunities for children to express concerns.

Children should always be given sufficient time and support to communicate in ways that are meaningful for them.

Therapeutic Safeguarding

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC integrates safeguarding with therapeutic practice.

Children benefit from:

- trusted relationships;
- low-demand approaches;
- animal-assisted interventions;
- outdoor learning;
- sensory regulation;
- counselling;
- Play Therapy;
- Drawing and Talking Therapy;
- opportunities for co-regulation with emotionally available adults.

These approaches promote emotional safety, resilience and wellbeing while helping children develop trust and confidence.



Partnership with Families

Parents and carers hold valuable knowledge about their child's communication, regulation and support needs.

We work collaboratively with families to:

- understand individual needs;
- identify changes in presentation;
- share safeguarding information appropriately;
- promote consistent support;
- improve outcomes for children.

Where safeguarding concerns require statutory intervention, the welfare of the child remains paramount.

Professional Curiosity and Diagnostic Overshadowing

Staff must guard against diagnostic overshadowing, where safeguarding concerns are incorrectly attributed solely to a child's diagnosis, disability or neurodivergence.

Professional curiosity requires staff to ask:

- Is this behaviour typical for this child?
- Has something changed?
- Could this indicate unmet need or harm?
- What might this child be communicating?

Children with SEND deserve the same level of safeguarding vigilance as all other children, and additional needs should never reduce professional curiosity or delay appropriate safeguarding action.

10. Early Help

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to identifying emerging concerns at the earliest opportunity and providing timely support to children, young people and their families before needs escalate. We recognise that effective Early Help can improve outcomes, reduce the need for statutory intervention and strengthen family resilience.

As a specialist therapeutic provider, we are often commissioned to work with children who are experiencing social, emotional or mental health difficulties, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), neurodevelopmental differences, trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), family breakdown or other complex needs. Through our regular contact with children, families and partner agencies, we are well placed to identify changes in presentation, recognise emerging vulnerabilities and contribute positively to multi-agency Early Help planning.

Early Help is a collaborative approach that brings together professionals, families and communities to identify needs, provide coordinated support and prevent concerns from escalating into statutory child protection intervention.

Our Approach to Early Help

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC adopts a strengths-based, child-centred and relationship-focused approach to Early Help.

Our work seeks to:



- identify emerging concerns as early as possible;
- build trusting relationships with children and families;
- promote resilience, confidence and emotional wellbeing;
- support positive family relationships;
- reduce barriers to education, community participation and social inclusion;
- improve emotional regulation and coping strategies;
- encourage collaborative problem-solving;
- ensure children receive the right support at the right time.

Our therapeutic model enables children to develop trusting relationships with emotionally available adults, often providing opportunities for concerns to emerge naturally over time.

Identifying Emerging Needs

Staff are expected to remain professionally curious and alert to changes in a child's presentation that may indicate additional support is required.

Examples may include:

- changes in behaviour or mood;
- increased anxiety;
- reduced engagement;
- deteriorating attendance;
- emotional dysregulation;
- family difficulties;
- bereavement or loss;
- housing instability;
- financial hardship;
- caring responsibilities;
- social isolation;
- mental health concerns;
- indicators of neglect;
- increasing risk-taking behaviour.

Not all concerns will require statutory safeguarding intervention. However, all concerns should be recognised, recorded and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Providing Early Help

Where appropriate and with consent (unless doing so would place a child at increased risk of harm), Apple Tree Farm Services CIC may contribute to Early Help by:

- providing therapeutic one-to-one support;
- delivering animal-assisted interventions;
- supporting emotional regulation;
- promoting school engagement and attendance;
- participating in Team Around the Child (TAC) or Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings;
- contributing to Early Help Assessments;
- attending multi-agency planning meetings;
- supporting transitions into education or other services;
- working alongside schools, health professionals and local authority services;



- signposting families to specialist or community support;
- providing practical advice and emotional support to parents and carers.

Working with Families

We believe that positive outcomes are most likely when children, families and professionals work collaboratively.

Parents and carers will normally be involved in Early Help planning wherever appropriate, recognising that they know their child best and play a central role in supporting positive change.

We will:

- communicate openly and respectfully;
- explain concerns honestly and sensitively;
- encourage collaborative decision-making;
- recognise family strengths alongside areas of need;
- maintain clear professional boundaries;
- share information appropriately and lawfully.

Where obtaining parental consent may increase the risk of harm to a child, safeguarding procedures will take precedence.

Escalating Concerns

Early Help does not replace statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

Where concerns indicate that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and will not delay action while attempting to initiate Early Help. Safeguarding concerns will always take precedence over Early Help processes.

11. Responding to Concerns

Every member of staff, volunteer and person working on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC has a personal responsibility to act immediately if they are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person.

Staff should never assume that another person has reported a concern.

It is not the responsibility of staff to investigate safeguarding concerns or determine whether abuse has occurred. Their responsibility is to recognise concerns, respond appropriately, record factual information and report concerns without delay.

Where there is uncertainty, staff should always seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Immediate Action

If a child is believed to be at immediate risk of serious harm:

- Contact the emergency services by dialling **999** if urgent police or ambulance assistance is required.
- Take any reasonable action necessary to protect the child without placing yourself or others at risk.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL as soon as it is safe to do so.



- Record the incident immediately.

Immediate safeguarding action should never be delayed while attempting to obtain managerial approval.

Responding to a Disclosure

Children may disclose abuse directly, indirectly or through behaviour.

If a child chooses to share information, staff should:

DO

- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully.
- Allow the child to speak freely.
- Take the child seriously.
- Reassure them they have done the right thing.
- Explain that you cannot promise confidentiality.
- Tell the child what will happen next.
- Record the conversation as soon as possible using the child's own words where appropriate.
- Report immediately to the DSL.

DO NOT

- Ask leading questions.
- Investigate the concern yourself.
- Express shock or disbelief.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Delay reporting.
- Discuss the concern unnecessarily with others.

Safeguarding Response Process

Step 1 – Recognise

You notice:

- an injury;
- concerning behaviour;
- a worrying disclosure;
- changes in presentation;
- information from another person;
- online concerns;
- concerns about another adult;
- indicators of exploitation or abuse.



Step 2 – Respond

- Stay calm.
- Prioritise the child's safety.
- Listen carefully.
- Do not investigate.
- Reassure appropriately.
- Explain that you will need to share the information.





Step 3 – Record

Record:

- what you saw;
- what was said;
- what the child said (using their own words wherever possible);
- dates;
- times;
- witnesses;
- actions taken.

Only record factual information.



Step 4 – Report

Report immediately to:

- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

or

- Deputy DSL

If neither is available and there is immediate risk, contact:

- Children's Social Care;
- MASH;
- Police;
- Emergency Services.



Step 5 – DSL Decision

The DSL will determine the appropriate response, which may include:

- no further action with rationale recorded;
- ongoing monitoring;
- internal support;
- Early Help;
- consultation with safeguarding agencies;
- referral to MASH;
- referral to Police;
- referral to health professionals;
- strategy discussions;
- Child Protection procedures.

Professional Challenge

If any member of staff believes that appropriate action has not been taken, they have a professional responsibility to respectfully challenge decisions and escalate concerns through safeguarding procedures.

The welfare of the child must always take precedence over organisational hierarchy.

12. Recording Concerns

Accurate, timely and objective record keeping is an essential component of effective safeguarding practice.



Safeguarding records provide an evidence base for decision-making, support effective multi-agency working and help identify patterns of concern over time.

All safeguarding concerns, however small they may appear, must be recorded and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Recording Principles

Records should be:

- factual;
- accurate;
- contemporaneous;
- objective;
- legible;
- signed and dated;
- stored securely.

Staff should distinguish clearly between:

- observed facts;
- direct quotations;
- professional observations;
- actions taken.

Personal opinion should be avoided unless clearly identified as professional judgement.

What Should Be Recorded

Records should include:

- child's full name;
- date of birth;
- date and time of the concern;
- who was present;
- factual observations;
- exact words spoken by the child where possible;
- injuries or visible signs;
- behaviour observed;
- actions taken;
- who the concern was reported to;
- referrals made;
- outcomes and follow-up actions.

Records should be completed as soon as possible following the incident.

Safeguarding Chronology

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will maintain an individual safeguarding chronology for children where safeguarding concerns exist.

Chronologies assist in identifying:

- recurring concerns;
- cumulative harm;
- emerging patterns;



- escalating risk;
- significant events;
- multi-agency involvement.

Chronologies should be reviewed regularly to inform safeguarding decision-making and support effective information sharing.

Confidentiality

Safeguarding information is confidential and will only be shared with those who have a legitimate professional need to know.

Staff must not:

- discuss safeguarding concerns in public areas;
- share information with colleagues who do not require it;
- retain safeguarding information for personal records;
- disclose safeguarding information to parents where doing so would increase risk.

Confidentiality must never prevent appropriate information sharing where necessary to safeguard a child.

Secure Storage

Safeguarding records will be:

- stored separately from general child records where appropriate;
- retained securely;
- protected against unauthorised access;
- stored in accordance with UK GDPR and Data Protection legislation;
- accessible only to authorised personnel.

Electronic safeguarding records will be password protected and access restricted.

Paper records will be stored in locked cabinets within secure areas.

Safeguarding records will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the organisation's Record Retention Policy and statutory guidance.

Information Sharing

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that effective safeguarding depends upon timely, proportionate and lawful information sharing.

Information will be shared where necessary:

- to safeguard children;
- to protect individuals from significant harm;
- to support multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- where required by law.

When making decisions regarding information sharing, staff will consider:

- the safety and welfare of the child;
- necessity and proportionality;
- statutory guidance;
- data protection legislation;
- advice from the DSL where appropriate.



The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent the sharing of safeguarding information where failure to do so would place a child at risk.

Transfer of Safeguarding Records

Where a child moves to another educational setting or service and safeguarding information is relevant to their ongoing safety and welfare, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that appropriate safeguarding records are transferred securely and promptly in accordance with statutory guidance and information sharing protocols.

A record of what has been shared, with whom, when and why will be retained by Apple Tree Farm Services CIC.

These sections are particularly important because Keeping Children Safe in Education has strengthened expectations around allegations management and low-level concerns in recent years. For a specialist therapeutic organisation like Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, these sections should promote a culture of openness, accountability and early reporting, while protecting both children and staff.

13. Allegations Against Adults

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises its duty to protect children from harm whilst also ensuring that adults working with children are treated fairly, consistently and in accordance with statutory guidance and employment law.

All allegations or concerns relating to adults working with children will be managed in accordance with the current Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) guidance, local safeguarding partnership procedures and advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

An allegation may relate to any person working or volunteering on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC, including:

- Directors;
- Employees;
- Volunteers;
- Students on placement;
- Agency workers;
- Sessional staff;
- Contractors;
- Therapists;
- Visiting professionals.

Every allegation will be taken seriously, responded to promptly and managed in a manner that safeguards children whilst ensuring a fair and proportionate process for the adult concerned.

What Constitutes an Allegation?

An allegation should be considered where it is believed that an adult working with children 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;



- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Concerns about behaviour outside the workplace may also be relevant where those behaviours indicate an ongoing risk to children.

Immediate Response

Where an allegation is made against an adult:

- the safety and welfare of the child will be the immediate priority;
- the allegation must be reported immediately;
- no member of staff should investigate the allegation themselves;
- the adult concerned should not be informed until appropriate advice has been obtained where necessary;
- appropriate records must be made immediately.

Reporting Allegations

Allegation against a member of staff



Report immediately to:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Director



The Director will consult the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** before any internal investigation takes place.



The LADO will advise whether:

- the allegation meets the threshold for formal management;
- police involvement is required;
- Children's Social Care should be involved;
- the matter should proceed as an internal employment issue.

Allegation against the Designated Safeguarding Lead

Report immediately to:

The Chair of the Board of Directors

The Chair will contact the **LADO** without delay and assume responsibility for coordinating the organisational response.

Allegation against the Director

Report immediately to:

The Chair of the Board of Directors

The Chair will consult directly with the **LADO** before any action is taken.

Allegation against the Chair of the Board

Any allegation concerning the Chair should be reported directly to the **LADO**, who will advise on appropriate governance arrangements.



During an Investigation

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will:

- prioritise the welfare of children;
- cooperate fully with Police, Children's Social Care and the LADO;
- maintain confidentiality throughout the process;
- avoid unnecessary discussion of the allegation;
- support both the child and the adult involved;
- ensure accurate records are maintained;
- follow advice received from external agencies.

Suspension is **not** an automatic response and will only be considered where necessary to safeguard children or protect the integrity of investigations.

Outcomes

Following investigation, allegations may be determined as:

- Substantiated
- Unsubstantiated
- Unfounded
- False
- Malicious

The organisation will implement any recommendations arising from investigations and consider whether learning can improve safeguarding practice.

Where required, referrals will be made to:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Teaching Regulation Agency (where applicable)
- Relevant professional regulators

Record Keeping

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Chair of the Board will maintain confidential records of:

- allegations;
- decisions made;
- advice received;
- actions taken;
- outcomes;
- referrals.

Records will be retained securely in accordance with statutory guidance and the organisation's Record Retention Policy.

Learning Lessons

Following any allegation, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will consider:

- whether safeguarding procedures were followed appropriately;
- whether policy amendments are required;
- whether additional staff training is necessary;

- whether organisational learning should be shared.

Safeguarding practice will be strengthened wherever learning opportunities are identified.

14. Low-Level Concerns

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to creating a culture in which adults feel confident to share concerns about professional conduct at an early stage.

Recognising and responding to low-level concerns helps prevent more serious safeguarding issues from developing and promotes an open, transparent and accountable safeguarding culture.

A low-level concern is **not** the same as an allegation that meets the harm threshold.

However, low-level concerns may indicate emerging patterns of behaviour that require discussion, reflection, support or management.

All low-level concerns will be treated seriously and managed proportionately.

What is a Low-Level Concern?

A low-level concern is any concern, no matter how small, regarding the conduct of an adult working with children that is inconsistent with the Staff Code of Conduct or expected professional standards.

Examples may include:

- being overly familiar with a child;
- showing favouritism;
- using inappropriate language;
- unnecessary physical contact;
- failing to maintain professional boundaries;
- communicating with children outside agreed procedures;
- inappropriate use of social media;
- failing to challenge poor practice;
- breaching organisational safeguarding procedures;
- behaviour that makes another adult feel uncomfortable, even if no child has raised concerns.

Low-level concerns may occur both inside and outside the workplace where professional suitability may be affected.

Reporting Low-Level Concerns

All staff have a professional responsibility to report low-level concerns promptly.

Concerns should be reported to:

- the Director; or
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Where concerns relate to either individual, they should be reported directly to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Responding to Low-Level Concerns

Each concern will be considered individually.

The response may include:



- professional discussion;
- clarification of expectations;
- reflective supervision;
- additional training;
- monitoring;
- management advice;
- formal investigation where new information indicates the threshold has been met.

Where multiple low-level concerns emerge regarding the same individual, these will be reviewed collectively to identify potential patterns of behaviour.

Confidential Recording

The Director will maintain a confidential register of:

- reported low-level concerns;
- actions taken;
- outcomes;
- themes identified;
- follow-up actions.

This register will be reviewed periodically to identify organisational learning and recurring safeguarding themes.

Self-Reporting

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC encourages staff to report incidents where they believe their own behaviour may have been misunderstood or may unintentionally have fallen below expected professional standards.

Self-reporting demonstrates openness and professionalism and will not automatically result in disciplinary action.

Culture of Openness

Low-level concerns should never be viewed as criticism or blame.

The purpose of reporting is to:

- protect children;
- protect staff;
- strengthen safeguarding culture;
- encourage reflective practice;
- identify concerns before they escalate.

Creating a culture where staff feel psychologically safe to raise concerns is an essential element of effective safeguarding governance.

15. Whistleblowing

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to fostering a culture in which all staff, volunteers and others working on behalf of the organisation feel confident to speak up about safeguarding concerns, poor practice or wrongdoing without fear of victimisation or retaliation.



Safeguarding children depends upon adults being willing to challenge unsafe practice and report concerns, regardless of the seniority or position of those involved. Every adult working with children has both a professional and moral responsibility to raise concerns where they believe children may be at risk or organisational practice falls below expected standards.

What Should Be Reported?

Whistleblowing may include concerns regarding:

- safeguarding practice;
- unsafe working practices;
- abuse or neglect;
- failure to follow safeguarding procedures;
- attempts to conceal safeguarding concerns;
- bullying or intimidation;
- discrimination;
- breaches of professional boundaries;
- criminal activity;
- misuse of organisational resources where children's welfare may be affected.

Whistleblowing is distinct from personal employment grievances, which should normally be managed through the organisation's Grievance Policy.

Reporting Concerns

Staff are encouraged to raise concerns initially with:

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- the Director; or
- the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Where concerns involve those individuals, staff should report directly to an appropriate external body such as:

- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);
- Children's Social Care;
- Ofsted (where applicable);
- the Police;
- the Charity Commission (where relevant);
- other statutory regulators.

Protection for Whistleblowers

No individual will suffer detriment for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith. Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will not tolerate:

- victimisation;
- intimidation;
- harassment;
- discrimination;
- retaliation

against anyone who raises a safeguarding concern honestly and responsibly.



Concerns raised maliciously or knowingly falsely may, however, be managed through appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Confidentiality

Where possible, concerns will be handled confidentially.

However, complete anonymity cannot always be guaranteed where safeguarding investigations or legal proceedings require disclosure.

Individuals raising concerns will be kept informed of progress wherever appropriate and lawful to do so.

Professional Responsibility

Every adult working within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC has a responsibility not only to safeguard children but also to safeguard the integrity of the organisation itself.

Remaining silent when unsafe practice is observed places children at risk.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC expects all adults working on its behalf to demonstrate professional curiosity, respectful challenge and moral courage by raising concerns whenever safeguarding standards fall below expectations.

16. Safer Recruitment

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding begins before an individual joins the organisation. Robust safer recruitment procedures are fundamental to protecting children and young people and reducing the risk of unsuitable individuals gaining access to them.

We are committed to recruiting and retaining staff, volunteers and practitioners who share our values, demonstrate professional integrity and are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Our recruitment and selection processes are designed to deter, identify and reject individuals who may pose a risk to children while ensuring fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment practices. All recruitment is undertaken in accordance with current statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions), Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements, the Equality Act 2010 and UK employment legislation. Our standalone Staff Recruitment Policy sets out the full recruitment process and safeguarding checks in detail.

Recruitment Principles

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will ensure that recruitment processes:

- place safeguarding and child welfare at the centre of recruitment decisions;
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion;
- are fair, transparent and objective;
- identify applicants whose values align with the organisation's therapeutic ethos;
- assess both competence and suitability to work with children;
- comply with current statutory safeguarding guidance.

Safeguarding considerations form part of every stage of recruitment, from workforce planning through to induction and probation.

Safer Recruitment Process

Recruitment procedures include, where appropriate:

- clearly defined job descriptions and person specifications that include safeguarding responsibilities;
- safeguarding statements within all recruitment advertisements;
- completion of an application form, including a full employment history;
- exploration of any gaps or discrepancies in employment history;
- self-declaration regarding criminal convictions and suitability;
- shortlisting by at least two appropriately trained individuals;
- safeguarding-focused interview questions;
- verification of identity;
- verification of qualifications and professional registration where applicable;
- verification of the right to work in the UK;
- verification of employment history;
- online searches of shortlisted candidates where permitted by current guidance;
- obtaining and scrutinising at least two satisfactory references;
- Enhanced DBS checks with Children's Barred List checks where the role constitutes regulated activity;
- overseas checks where applicable;
- medical fitness declarations where appropriate.

Conditional offers of employment will not be confirmed until all required safeguarding checks have been completed and considered satisfactory unless exceptional circumstances apply and an appropriate written risk assessment has been completed.

Recruitment of Volunteers and Sessional Workers (Low Risk Recruitment)

The organisation applies proportionate safeguarding measures to all volunteers, students, agency workers, contractors, self-employed practitioners and sessional workers.

The level of safeguarding checks undertaken will be determined by:

- the nature of the role;
- frequency of contact with children;
- level of supervision;
- whether the role constitutes regulated activity;
- current statutory guidance.

All individuals working with children are expected to comply with organisational safeguarding procedures regardless of their employment status.

Safeguarding During Selection

Selection processes are designed not only to assess knowledge and experience but also to evaluate candidates' values, attitudes and commitment to safeguarding.

Interview panels will explore:

- motivation for working with children;
- understanding of safeguarding responsibilities;
- professional boundaries;



- attitudes towards equality, diversity and inclusion;
- responses to safeguarding scenarios;
- ability to work within Apple Tree Farm Services CIC's therapeutic, trauma-informed and neuro-affirming approach.

Where concerns arise during recruitment, further enquiries will be made before any appointment is confirmed.

Induction and Probation

Safeguarding does not end at appointment.

All new staff, volunteers and practitioners will complete an induction programme before undertaking unsupervised work with children.

Induction will include:

- safeguarding and child protection procedures;
- staff code of conduct;
- professional boundaries;
- whistleblowing;
- low-level concerns;
- online safety;
- health and safety;
- behaviour support;
- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- therapeutic practice and organisational values.

All new staff will complete a probationary period during which safeguarding practice, professional conduct and suitability to work with children will be monitored through regular supervision.

Ongoing Suitability

Safeguarding responsibilities continue throughout employment.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC expects all staff to:

- maintain high standards of professional conduct;
- disclose any changes that may affect their suitability to work with children;
- comply with safeguarding procedures at all times;
- participate in supervision and appraisal;
- engage in ongoing safeguarding training.

The organisation reserves the right to undertake additional safeguarding checks where appropriate and lawful.

17. Training

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that effective safeguarding depends upon knowledgeable, confident and well-supported staff.

Safeguarding training is not viewed as a one-off event but as a continuous process of learning, reflection and professional development.

All adults working for or on behalf of the organisation will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role and responsibilities.



Induction Training

Before working unsupervised with children, all new staff, volunteers, students and sessional workers will receive safeguarding induction covering:

- this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- the Staff Code of Conduct;
- safeguarding responsibilities;
- recognising abuse and neglect;
- responding to disclosures;
- reporting concerns;
- low-level concerns;
- whistleblowing;
- online safety;
- child-on-child abuse;
- Prevent Duty awareness;
- professional boundaries;
- confidentiality and information sharing.

Mandatory Safeguarding Training

All staff will receive:

- safeguarding induction before commencing work with children;
- safeguarding updates at least annually;
- regular safeguarding briefings throughout the year;
- additional training whenever legislation or organisational procedures change;
- opportunities to reflect on safeguarding practice through supervision and team meetings.

Safeguarding learning forms part of ongoing professional development rather than relying solely on periodic refresher courses.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- undertake specialist DSL training appropriate to the role;
- maintain up-to-date knowledge through regular safeguarding updates;
- participate in local safeguarding network meetings where appropriate;
- undertake additional training relevant to emerging safeguarding risks;
- ensure safeguarding practice reflects current legislation and national guidance.

Role-Specific Training

Additional training may include:

- trauma-informed practice;
- attachment-informed practice;
- PACE;
- Neuro-affirming practice;
- child exploitation;



- online safety;
- harmful sexual behaviour;
- Prevent;
- mental health;
- suicide awareness;
- self-harm;
- de-escalation and regulation;
- safer recruitment;
- information sharing;
- record keeping.

Training programmes will reflect the needs of the children accessing our services.

Supervision and Reflective Practice

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that safeguarding competence develops through reflection as well as formal training.

Regular supervision provides opportunities to:

- discuss safeguarding concerns;
- reflect on decision-making;
- explore professional boundaries;
- identify learning needs;
- promote staff wellbeing;
- strengthen safeguarding practice.

Reflective supervision is particularly important within therapeutic practice where staff work closely with children who have experienced trauma and adversity.

Safeguarding Culture

Training alone does not create safe organisations.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC promotes a safeguarding culture in which:

- safeguarding is discussed openly;
- staff feel confident raising concerns;
- professional curiosity is encouraged;
- respectful challenge is welcomed;
- learning is shared following incidents;
- safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility.

18. Online Safety

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that technology is an integral part of children's lives and can provide valuable opportunities for learning, communication and wellbeing. However, it also presents safeguarding risks that require robust organisational arrangements, staff awareness and ongoing education.

Online safety is a safeguarding issue and is embedded throughout our safeguarding culture.

The organisation is committed to protecting children from online abuse while promoting the safe, responsible and positive use of technology.



Online Safety Principles

Our online safety arrangements aim to:

- protect children from online harm;
- promote digital resilience;
- educate children about safe online behaviours;
- support parents and carers in understanding online risks;
- ensure staff model safe and professional use of technology;
- maintain secure organisational systems.

Online safety is everyone's responsibility.

Online Risks

Staff should remain alert to risks including:

- online grooming;
- cyberbullying;
- sexual exploitation;
- coercion and manipulation;
- extremist content;
- radicalisation;
- violent content;
- misinformation and disinformation;
- fraud and scams;
- image-based abuse;
- gaming-related exploitation;
- online challenges;
- artificial intelligence misuse;
- deepfake imagery;
- exposure to harmful or age-inappropriate content.

AI and Emerging Technologies

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that artificial intelligence presents emerging safeguarding risks.

Children may encounter:

- AI-generated sexual images;
- deepfake videos;
- manipulated photographs;
- AI chatbots encouraging harmful behaviour;
- impersonation;
- identity fraud.

Staff will remain informed about emerging technologies and adapt safeguarding responses accordingly.

Organisational Devices and Systems

Where organisational technology is used, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will ensure that:



- appropriate filtering systems reduce access to harmful content;
- monitoring arrangements help identify safeguarding risks;
- access permissions are proportionate to users;
- systems are maintained securely;
- software is updated regularly;
- cyber security measures are implemented.

Filtering and monitoring complement, but do not replace, effective supervision and safeguarding practice.

Professional Use of Technology

Staff must use technology professionally at all times.

Staff must not:

- communicate with children through personal social media accounts;
- use personal devices to store safeguarding information;
- photograph children using personal devices unless authorised under exceptional circumstances;
- accept social media requests from children or young people;
- share confidential information using insecure communication methods.

Professional boundaries apply equally online and offline.

Mobile Phones, Photography and Recording

The use of mobile phones, cameras and recording devices will be managed in accordance with the organisation's Mobile Phone and Photography Policies.

Images of children will only be taken:

- for legitimate organisational purposes;
- with appropriate consent where required;
- using authorised devices;
- stored securely.

Unauthorised photography or recording is prohibited.

Educating Children

Where appropriate, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will help children develop knowledge and skills relating to:

- healthy online relationships;
- privacy;
- consent;
- recognising grooming;
- online scams;
- respectful communication;
- reporting concerns;
- digital footprints;
- critical thinking;
- managing screen time.



Education will be tailored to children's developmental stage, communication needs and neurodivergent profiles.

Responding to Online Safety Concerns

Any online safeguarding concern should be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Staff will:

- preserve evidence where appropriate;
- avoid viewing or sharing illegal images unnecessarily;
- report concerns immediately to the DSL;
- involve statutory agencies where required;
- support affected children and families.

Where criminal offences may have occurred, advice will be sought from Police and other relevant agencies.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Online safeguarding is most effective when families and professionals work together.

Where appropriate, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will:

- share information about emerging online risks;
- signpost families to trusted online safety resources;
- encourage open conversations about technology;
- support parents in promoting safe online behaviours at home.

Children are most effectively protected when consistent messages are reinforced across home, school and therapeutic environments.

19. Mobile Phones, Photography and Recording Devices

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that mobile phones, cameras, tablets and other digital devices are an integral part of modern life. Whilst these technologies provide many benefits, inappropriate use can present safeguarding risks for children, young people and staff.

The organisation is committed to ensuring that all images, recordings and digital communications involving children are managed safely, lawfully and respectfully.

The use of mobile phones and digital devices must always support, and never compromise, the safety, dignity and privacy of children and young people.

Professional Use of Mobile Phones

Staff may carry personal mobile phones whilst at work; however, their use must never interfere with the supervision, safety or wellbeing of children.

Staff must:

- use personal devices only during designated breaks or in exceptional circumstances;
- ensure children are appropriately supervised at all times;
- maintain professional boundaries in all digital communications;
- comply with organisational confidentiality requirements.

Personal devices must never be used in place of organisational safeguarding procedures.



Photography and Video Recording

Photographs and video recordings of children may only be taken where they are:

- for legitimate organisational purposes;
- consistent with the child's welfare and dignity;
- appropriately authorised;
- compliant with consent arrangements;
- taken using authorised organisational devices wherever possible.

Images must never expose children to unnecessary risk or embarrassment.

The organisation will ensure that photographs are used responsibly and stored securely in accordance with data protection legislation.

Personal Devices

Staff, volunteers and visitors must not:

- use personal mobile phones to photograph or film children;
- store images of children on personal devices;
- use personal email accounts to share information relating to children;
- communicate with children through personal messaging services or social media;
- record safeguarding information on personal devices.

Where exceptional circumstances require the use of a personal device, authorisation must be obtained from the Director or Designated Safeguarding Lead, and images or information transferred immediately to secure organisational systems before being permanently deleted from the personal device.

Organisational Devices

Where organisational devices are used, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will ensure that they are:

- password protected;
- appropriately encrypted where necessary;
- maintained securely;
- accessible only to authorised users;
- used solely for legitimate organisational purposes.

Visitors

Visitors attending Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will be expected to respect the privacy of children and young people.

Visitors must not photograph, record or film children unless specifically authorised by the organisation and appropriate consent arrangements are in place.

Social Media

Staff must maintain clear professional boundaries online.

Staff must not:

- accept or initiate friend requests with children or young people using personal accounts;
- communicate with children using personal social media platforms;



- share images or information that could identify children without appropriate authorisation;
- post content that could undermine professional standards or public confidence in the organisation.

The organisation recognises that conduct outside the workplace may affect an individual's suitability to work with children where it raises safeguarding concerns.

Recording Safeguarding Information

Safeguarding records must only be created, stored and shared using approved organisational systems.

Audio or video recordings of safeguarding disclosures should not normally be made unless specifically directed by statutory agencies.

Written safeguarding records remain the primary method of recording concerns.

20. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC recognises that effective safeguarding depends upon timely, accurate and appropriate information sharing.

Whilst we respect the privacy and confidentiality of children and families, confidentiality must never become a barrier to protecting children from harm.

The welfare of the child remains the paramount consideration in all decisions relating to information sharing.

Confidentiality

All staff are expected to maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding information obtained through their work.

Confidential information should only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate professional need to know.

Staff must not:

- discuss safeguarding concerns in public places;
- share confidential information with family or friends;
- access records without legitimate reason;
- disclose confidential information through personal devices or social media;
- retain safeguarding information for personal records.

Maintaining confidentiality helps preserve trust, dignity and respect for children and families while supporting effective safeguarding practice.

Information Sharing Principles

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC follows the principles contained within:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;



- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners.

Information will be shared where it is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure.

Sharing Information to Safeguard Children

Information may be shared without consent where:

- there is reason to believe a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm;
- sharing is necessary to prevent or detect crime;
- sharing is required by law;
- obtaining consent would place a child at increased risk;
- seeking consent would prejudice a safeguarding investigation.

Staff should never delay sharing information where doing so may increase risk to a child.

Seeking Consent

Where appropriate and safe to do so, Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will seek consent before sharing information.

However, consent is **not** required where:

- safeguarding concerns meet statutory thresholds;
- the safety of a child could be compromised;
- another person may be placed at risk;
- legislation permits or requires information sharing.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will provide advice where uncertainty exists.

Data Protection

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to ensuring personal information is handled lawfully, fairly and transparently.

Safeguarding records will be:

- processed lawfully under UK GDPR;
- stored securely;
- retained in accordance with the organisation's Record Retention Policy;
- accessible only to authorised individuals;
- protected against unauthorised disclosure or loss.

Children's safeguarding records are recognised as highly sensitive personal data requiring enhanced protection.

Multi-Agency Working

Safeguarding relies upon effective partnership working.

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC will share relevant safeguarding information, where appropriate, with:

- Children's Social Care;
- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
- Police;
- Health professionals;



- Schools and educational settings;
- Early Help services;
- Local Authorities;
- NHS services;
- other safeguarding partners.

Information sharing will always be proportionate to the identified safeguarding need.

Recording Information Sharing Decisions

Where safeguarding information is shared, records should include:

- what information was shared;
- with whom;
- when it was shared;
- why it was shared;
- whether consent was sought;
- if consent was not sought, the reasons why;
- any advice received.

This supports accountability, transparency and effective safeguarding decision-making.

21. Monitoring and Review

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to continuously reviewing and improving safeguarding practice to ensure that children and young people receive the highest standard of protection, care and support.

Safeguarding is a standing governance priority and forms part of the organisation's wider quality assurance and risk management arrangements.

Annual Policy Review

This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be formally reviewed:

- annually;
- following significant legislative or statutory guidance updates;
- following changes to local safeguarding partnership arrangements;
- following significant safeguarding incidents or learning reviews;
- where organisational changes require amendments.

The policy may be updated at any time where safeguarding practice or statutory guidance changes.

Minor updates, such as changes to contact details or job titles, may be made between formal review dates.

Safeguarding Quality Assurance

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor safeguarding practice through:

- safeguarding supervision;
- case file audits;
- chronology reviews;
- safeguarding training records;

- incident reviews;
- feedback from children and families;
- multi-agency working;
- learning from complaints and compliments;
- reflective practice discussions.

Findings will inform service improvements and staff development.

Governance Reporting

The Board of Directors will receive an annual safeguarding report from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The report should include, where appropriate:

- safeguarding activity during the year;
- training compliance;
- safeguarding referrals and outcomes (anonymised);
- emerging safeguarding themes;
- low-level concerns;
- allegations against adults;
- safeguarding audits;
- policy compliance;
- learning from incidents;
- recommendations for improvement.

The Board will use this information to provide strategic oversight and assurance that safeguarding arrangements remain effective.

Learning and Continuous Improvement

Apple Tree Farm Services CIC is committed to maintaining a culture of continuous learning.

The organisation will:

- reflect upon safeguarding practice;
- implement recommendations from safeguarding reviews;
- respond to national safeguarding developments;
- encourage professional curiosity;
- promote open discussion and constructive challenge;
- celebrate examples of good safeguarding practice.

Learning from experience is essential to maintaining a safe organisation.

22. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the following organisational policies and procedures, which together form Apple Tree Farm Services CIC's safeguarding framework:

Safeguarding Governance

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy



- Supervision Policy

Safer Workforce

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Staff Training and Development Policy

Child Protection and Welfare

- Positive Behaviour Support Policy
- Physical Intervention Policy (where applicable)
- Health and Safety Policy
- Evacuation Policy
- Absconding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Mobile Phone, Photography and Social Media Policy

Information Governance

- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Cyber Security Policy

Therapeutic Practice

- Counselling Service Policy
- Play Therapy Procedures
- Drawing and Talking Procedures
- Medication Policy
- Animal Welfare Policy (where safeguarding overlaps with therapeutic delivery)

These policies should be read in conjunction with this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are consistently understood and implemented across the organisation

Responsibility for Implementation

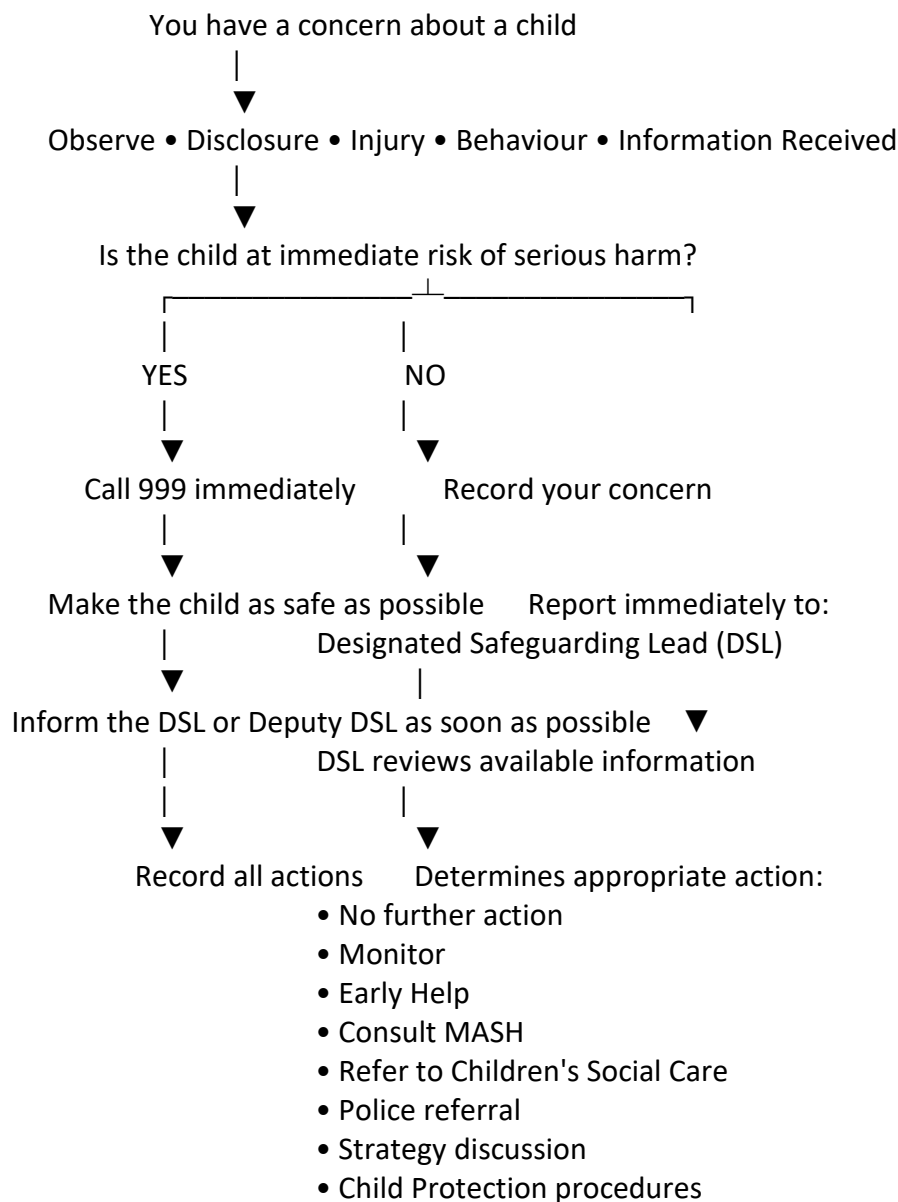
All staff, volunteers, directors, contractors and professionals working on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and the related policies relevant to their role.

Failure to comply with safeguarding policies may result in disciplinary action, termination of engagement and, where appropriate, referral to external safeguarding agencies or professional regulators.

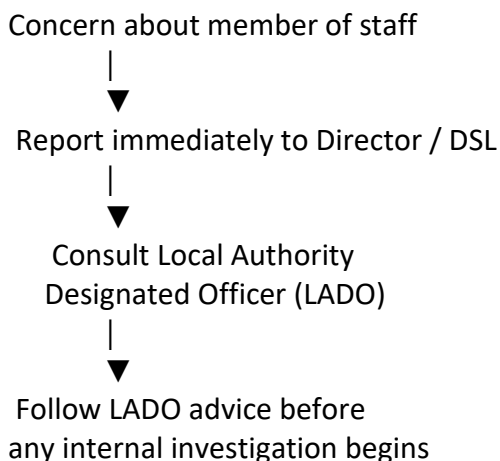
Appendix 1

Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart

Immediate Safeguarding Response



If the concern relates to an adult working with children





If the concern relates to the DSL

Report immediately to the
Chair of the Board of Directors



Chair contacts LADO
for advice

Remember

DO

- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Reassure appropriately
- ✓ Record accurately
- ✓ Report immediately

DO NOT

- ✗ Investigate
- ✗ Ask leading questions
- ✗ Promise confidentiality
- ✗ Delay reporting
- ✗ Discuss unnecessarily

Appendix 2

Key Safeguarding Contacts

(Review annually and whenever contact details change.)

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Brenda Pedroni	07908 783759	brenda@appletriefarmservices.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Phil Leonard	07554817553	phil@appletriefarmservices.co.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Shelly Buswell	07423191935	shelly@appletriefarmservices.co.uk



Devon Safeguarding Contacts

Service	Contact
Devon MASH	0345 155 1071
MASH Secure Email	mashsecure@devon.gov.uk
Emergency Duty Team	0345 600 0388 (<i>confirm annually</i>)
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	01392 384964 (<i>confirm annually</i>)
Devon & Cornwall Police (Emergency)	999
Devon & Cornwall Police (Non-Emergency)	101
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111

Other Useful Contacts

Organisation	Website
Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership	https://www.dscp.org.uk
CEOP	https://www.ceop.police.uk
NSPCC Learning	https://learning.nspcc.org.uk
UK Safer Internet Centre	https://saferinternet.org.uk

Appendix 3

Signs and Indicators of Abuse

Important Note

The presence of one or more indicators does **not** necessarily mean abuse has occurred. Indicators should always be considered alongside the child's individual circumstances, developmental stage, communication needs and wider context.

Staff should remain professionally curious and discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Physical Abuse

Possible indicators include:

- unexplained bruising
- burns
- bite marks
- fractures
- repeated injuries
- injuries inconsistent with explanation
- fear of physical contact
- flinching
- wearing clothing to conceal injuries
- reluctance to go home
- delayed medical treatment



Emotional Abuse

Possible indicators include:

- excessive anxiety
- low self-esteem
- withdrawn behaviour
- emotional dysregulation
- developmental delay
- aggression
- self-harm
- eating difficulties
- extreme compliance
- lack of confidence
- fearfulness
- attachment difficulties

Sexual Abuse

Possible indicators include:

- sexualised language beyond developmental stage
- sexualised behaviour
- fear of particular people
- genital pain
- pregnancy
- sexually transmitted infections
- unexplained gifts
- online grooming indicators
- self-harm
- anxiety
- depression
- sleep disturbance

Neglect

Possible indicators include:

- persistent hunger
- poor hygiene
- inappropriate clothing
- untreated medical needs
- tiredness
- poor attendance
- developmental delay
- poor growth
- inadequate supervision
- unsafe home conditions

Child Criminal Exploitation



Possible indicators include:

- going missing
- unexplained money
- expensive clothing
- multiple mobile phones
- carrying drugs or weapons
- association with older peers
- increased aggression
- unexplained travel

Child Sexual Exploitation

Possible indicators include:

- older boyfriend/girlfriend
- gifts
- hotel stays
- missing episodes
- sexually transmitted infections
- secrecy
- emotional withdrawal
- online relationships
- unexplained money

Radicalisation

Possible indicators include:

- significant change in beliefs
- isolation
- extremist language
- accessing extremist material
- intolerance
- fixation on conspiracy theories
- sudden changes in friendship groups

Online Abuse

Possible indicators include:

- secretive online behaviour
- distress after using devices
- multiple online accounts
- receiving gifts from unknown people
- excessive online use
- grooming indicators
- image sharing

Mental Health

Possible indicators requiring safeguarding consideration include:

- sudden deterioration in wellbeing
- self-harm
- suicidal ideation
- persistent anxiety
- depression
- eating disorders
- substance misuse

Mental health concerns do not automatically indicate abuse but may be an important safeguarding indicator.

Children with SEND

Staff should remember that children with SEND:

- may communicate differently
- may not recognise abusive behaviour
- may mask distress
- may communicate through behaviour
- may require adapted communication

Staff should avoid diagnostic overshadowing and remain professionally curious.

Appendix 4

Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Key Responsibilities
Board of Directors	Strategic safeguarding leadership; policy approval; governance; safeguarding assurance; annual review; resource allocation; oversight of organisational safeguarding culture.
Chair of the Board	Receives allegations against the Director or DSL where appropriate; provides independent safeguarding oversight; liaises with the LADO where required.
Director	Operational accountability for safeguarding; implementation of policies; safer recruitment; safeguarding culture; staff supervision; quality assurance; reporting to the Board.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Leads safeguarding practice; manages referrals; liaises with Children's Social Care, Police and MASH; maintains safeguarding records; supports staff; delivers safeguarding advice; prepares annual safeguarding report.
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Supports and deputises for the DSL; assists with safeguarding referrals, record keeping, advice and multi-agency working.
Managers/Senior Staff	Promote safeguarding culture; supervise staff; ensure procedures are followed; support safeguarding decision-making; escalate concerns appropriately.
Employees	Recognise, respond, record and report safeguarding concerns immediately; maintain professional boundaries; complete safeguarding training; contribute to a safe environment.



Role	Key Responsibilities
Volunteers	Work within organisational safeguarding procedures; report concerns immediately; maintain professional conduct; complete induction and safeguarding training appropriate to their role.
Students and Placement Learners	Work under supervision; follow safeguarding procedures; report concerns immediately; maintain professional standards.
Contractors and Visiting Professionals	Comply with safeguarding arrangements while on site or delivering services; report concerns; maintain professional boundaries.

Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Every adult working for or on behalf of Apple Tree Farm Services CIC has both a professional and personal duty to:

- place the welfare of children first;
- maintain professional curiosity;
- recognise safeguarding concerns;
- act without delay;
- report concerns immediately;
- contribute to creating a safe, inclusive and therapeutic environment.

No individual should ever assume that someone else will report a concern.

This policy will be reviewed every year and updated where necessary.

Farm Manager

This policy was last reviewed on: 10/07/2026